



Self-Restraint  
*versus*  
Self-Indulgence

BY  
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## Publisher's Note

The second edition is merely a reprint of the first, except for the foreword by Gandhiji and the inclusion, at his suggestion, of Thoreau's essay on *Chastity and Sesuality* as appendix II.



a slavery which it does not feel, so does not resist.'

" Says Ruyssen:

' While continence is a virtue full of repose, incontinence opens the door to an unknown guest who may become formidable. The revelation of passion, which is troublesome at any age, may become in youth the signal of a radical perversion, we would say of an irreparable disturbance of the balance of the will and the senses. The boy who has contact for the first time with any woman whatsoever, as a passing encounter, is really playing with his physical, intellectual, and moral life; he does not know but it will be the same to-morrow in the family, at work, in social life; he does not know how the sensual revelation will come back to haunt him, what servitude without hope may represent the too exact term of 'mastery'; and we know of more than one life ruined after a beginning of richest promise, the first disappointments of which dated from the first moral fall.'

" The celebrated verses of the poet echo these remarks of the philosopher:

' Man's virgin soul is as a vessel deep;  
If the first drops inpoured should tainted be,  
Across the soul all ocean's waves may sweep,  
Yet fail that vast abyss from stain to free.'

" And, not less, this advice of the great British physiologist, John G. M. Kendrick, Professor of Physiology at Glasgow University:

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## Foreword

That the first edition was sold out practically within a week of its publication is a matter of joy to me. The correspondence that the series of articles collected in this volume has given rise to shows the need of such a publication. May those who have not made self-indulgence a religion, but who are struggling to regain lost self-control, which should under normal conditions be our natural state, find some help from a perusal of these pages. For their guidance the following instructions may prove useful:

1. Remember if you are married that your wife is your friend, companion and co-worker, not an instrument of sexual enjoyment.

2. Self-control is the law of your being. Therefore the sexual act can be performed only when both desire it and that too subject to rules which in their lucidity both may have agreed upon.

3. If you are unmarried you owe it to yourself, to society and to your future partner to keep yourself pure. If you cultivate this sense of loyalty, you will find it as an infallible protection against all temptation.

4. Think always of that unseen Power which though we may never see we all feel within us as watching and noting every impure thought and you will find that Power ever helping you.

5. Laws governing a life of self-restraint must be necessarily different from a life of self-indulgence. Therefore you will regulate your society, your reading, your haunts of recreation and your food.

You will seek the society of the good and the pure.

You will resolutely refrain from reading passion-breeding novels and magazines and read the works that sustain humanity. You will make one book your constant companion for reference and guidance.

You will avoid theatres and cinemas. Recreation is where you may not dissipate yourself but recreate yourself. You will therefore attend *Bhajan Mandalis* where the word and the tune uplift the soul.

You will eat not to satisfy your palate but your hunger. A self-indulgent man lives to eat; a self-restrained man eats to live. Therefore you

will abstain from all irritating condiments, alcohol which excites the nerves, and narcotics which deaden the sense of right and wrong. You will regulate the quantity and times of your meals.

6. When your passions threaten to get the better of you go down on your knees and cry out to God for help. *Ramanama* is my infallible Help. As extraneous aid take a hip-bath, *i. e.* sit in a tub full of cold water with your legs out of it, and you will find your passions have immediately cooled. Sit in it for a few minutes unless you are weak and there is danger of a chill.

7. Take brisk walking exercise in the open air early in the morning and at night before going to bed.

8. 'Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise,' is a sound proverb. 9 o'clock to bed and 4 o'clock to rise is a good rule. Go to bed on an empty stomach. Therefore your last meal must not be after 6 p. m.

9. Remember that man is a representative of God to serve all that lives and thus to express God's dignity and love. Let service be your sole joy and you will need no other enjoyment in life.

M. K. GANDHI



## ‘ Towards Moral Bankruptcy ’

### I

Kind friends continue to send me cuttings from Indian newspapers approvingly dealing with the question of birth-control by the use of contraceptives. My correspondence with young men on their private conduct is increasing. I am able to discuss in these pages only an infinitesimal portion of the questions raised by my correspondents. American friends send me literature on the subject and some are even angry with me for having expressed an opinion against the use of contraceptives. They deplore that as an advanced reformer in many ways I should be mediæval in my views about birth-control. I find too that the advocates of the use of contraceptives number among them some of the soberest of men and women of all lands.

I therefore thought that there must be something very decisive in favour of the methods advocated and felt too that I should say on the subject more than I have done. Whilst I was

thinking of the problem and of the question of reading the literature on the subject a book called *Towards Moral Bankruptcy* was placed in my hands for reading. It deals with this very subject and, as it appears to me, in a perfectly scientific manner. The original is in French by M. Paul Bureau and is entitled "*D' Indiscipline des mœurs*" which literally means "the indiscipline of morals." The translation is published by Constable and Company and has an introduction by Dr. Mary Scharlieb, C. B. E., M. D., M. S. (Lond.). It covers 538 pages in 15 chapters.

Having read the book I felt that before I summarised the author's views, I must in justice to the cause read the standard literature in favour of the methods advocated. I consequently borrowed from the Servants of India Society such literature as they had on the subject. They have very kindly lent me some of the books in their possession. Kaka Kalelkar who is studying the subject has given me Havelock Ellis' volumes specially bearing on the subject and a friend has sent me the special number of *The Practitioner* in which is collected some valuable medical opinion from well known practitioners.

My purpose in collecting literature on the subject was to test the accuracy, so far as a layman could, of M. Bureau's conclusions. One often finds that there are two sides to questions even when scientists discuss them and that there



is much to be said for either side. I was anxious therefore to know the view-points of the advocates of contraceptives before I introduced to the reader M. Bureau's volume. I have come to the deliberate conclusion that so far at least as India is concerned, there is no case for the use of contraceptives. Those who advocate their use for Indian conditions either do not know them or choose to ignore them. But if it can be proved that the methods advocated are harmful even in the West, it would be unnecessary to examine the special Indian conditions.

Let us therefore see what M. Bureau has to say. His studies are confined to France. But France means much. It is considered to be one of the most advanced countries in the world and if the methods have failed in France, they are not likely to succeed elsewhere.

Opinions may differ as to the meaning of the word 'failure.' I must therefore define the word as it is here meant. The methods must be proved to have failed if it can be shown that moral bonds have loosened, licentiousness has increased, and that instead of the check having been exercised by men and women for purposes of health and economic limitation of families only, it has been used principally for feeding animal passions. This is the moderate position. The extreme moral position condemns the use of contraceptives in every conceivable circumstance,

it being contended that it is not necessary for man or woman to satisfy the sexual instinct except when the act is meant for race reproduction, even as it is not necessary for man or woman to eat except for sustaining the body. There is also the third position. There is a class of men who contend that there is no such thing as morality or that if there is it consists not in exercising restraint but in indulgence of every form of animal appetite, so long as it does not so impair the constitution as to render it unfit for the very indulgence which is its object. For this extreme position I do not suppose M. Bureau has written his volume. For M. Bureau concludes his book by quoting Tom Mann's saying, 'The future is for the nations who are chaste'.

In the first part of his book M. Bureau has collected facts which make most dismal reading. It shows how vast organisations have sprung up in France which merely pander to man's basest tastes. Even the one claim of advocate of contraceptives that abortions must disappear with the use of these methods cannot be sustained. 'It is certain,' says M. Bureau, 'that during the twenty five years that have especially seen the increase in France of anti-conceptionist methods, the number of criminal abortions has not become less.' M. Bureau is of opinion that abortions are on the increase. He puts down the figure at

anything between 2,75,000 and 3,25,000 per year. Public opinion does not look upon them with the horror that it did years ago.

## II

"In the wake of abortion", says M. Bureau, "come infanticide, incest, and crimes that outrage nature. There is nothing special to say about the first, except that the crime has become more frequent in spite of all the facilities offered to unmarried mothers and of the extension of anti-conceptionist practices and abortion. It no longer arouses the same reprobation among so called 'respectable' people, and juries usually return a verdict of 'not guilty'."

M. Bureau devotes a full section to the growth of pornographic literature. He defines it "as the exploitation, with an erotic or obscene intention, of the resources which literature, the drama, and pictures place at men's disposal for their mental refreshment and repose." And he adds, "In every branch of its business it has secured markets, the extent of which may be gauged by the ingenuity and excellent commercial organisation of the directors, the enormous amount of capital, the unexampled perfection of the methods employed." "The impression experienced has been so strong and so unique that the whole psychological life of the individual is affected by

it," and "a sort of secondary sexual life, which exists wholly in the imagination, is created."

M. Bureau then quotes this pathetic paragraph from M. Ruyssen:

"All pornographic and sadic literature secures in this psychological law the most powerful enticement which it exerts over an innumerable number of readers, and the flourishing circulation of this literature shows beyond dispute that those who live a secondary sexual life through their imagination are legion, not to mention those in lunatic asylums — especially in a period like our own, when the abuse of newspapers and books creates around all consciences what W. James calls 'a plurality of under-universes,' in which each can lose himself, and forget, along with himself, the duties of the present hour."

These disastrous consequences, it should never be forgotten, are a direct result of one single fundamental error, namely, that sexual indulgence for its own sake is a human necessity and that without it neither man nor woman reaches his or her full growth. Immediately a person becomes possessed of such an idea and begins to look upon what in his estimation was one time a vice as a virtue, there is no end to the multiplication of devices that would excite animal passions and help him to indulge in them.

M. Bureau then gives chapter and verse to show how the daily press, the magazine, the

pamphlet, the novel, the photograph and the theatre increasingly pander to and provide for this debasing taste.

But the reference hitherto has been to the decay of morals amongst unmarried people. M. Bureau next proceeds to show the measure of moral indiscipline in the married state. He says: "Among the aristocracy, the middle class, and the peasants, vanity and avarice are responsible for a vast number of marriages." "Marriage is entered upon also to obtain an advantageous post, to join two properties, especially two landed estates, to regularise a former connection or to legitimatise a natural child; to provide unfailing and devoted attentions for a man's rheumatics and old age, to be able to choose the place of his garrison at the time of conscription," also "to put an end to a life of vice of which they are beginning to be weary and to substitute another form of sexual life."

M. Bureau then cites facts and figures to show that these marriages, instead of reducing licentiousness, actually promote it. This degradation has been immensely helped by the so-called scientific or mechanical inventions designed to restrict the effect of the sexual act without interfering with the act itself. I must pass by the painful paragraphs regarding the increase in adultery and startling figures regarding judicial separations and divorces which during the last

twenty years have more than doubled themselves. I can also make only a passing reference to the extension of unrestricted freedom for indulgence to the female sex on the principle of 'the same moral standard for the two sexes.' The perfection of the anti-conceptional practices and the methods of bringing about abortion has led to the emancipation of either sex from all moral restraint. No wonder marriage itself is laughed at. Here is a passage M. Bureau quotes from a popular author: 'Marriage is always according to my judgment one of the most barbarous institutions ever imagined. I have no doubt that it will be abolished if the human race makes any progress towards justice and reason. . . . But men are too gross and women too cowardly to demand a nobler law than that which rules them.'

The results of the practices referred to by M. Bureau and of the theories by which the practices are justified are minutely examined. He exclaims: "We are, then, being carried away by the movement of moral indiscipline towards new destinies. What are they? Is the future that opens before us one of progress and light, of beauty and growing spirituality, or of retrogression and darkness, of deformity and animalism that is ever demanding more? Is the indiscipline which has been established, one of those fruitful revolts against antiquated rules, one of those

'beneficent rebellions which posterity remembers with gratitude because they were at certain epochs the necessary preliminary to its progress and its rise, or is it not rather the old Adam which rises up within us against the rules whose very strictness is indispensable if we are to withstand the thrust of its bestial appeal? Are we face to face with an evil revolt against the discipline of safety and life?' Then M. Bureau cites overwhelming testimony to show that hitherto the results have been disastrous in every respect. They threaten life itself.

### III

It is one thing when married people regulate, so far as it is humanly possible, the number of their progeny by moral restraint, and totally another when they do so in spite of sexual indulgence and by means adopted to obviate the result of such indulgence. In the one case, the people gain in every respect. In the other there is nothing but harm. M. Bureau has produced figures and diagrams to show that the increasing use of contraceptives for the purpose of giving free-play to animal passions and yet obviating the natural results of such indulgence has resulted in the birth-rate being much lower than the death-rate, not in Paris only, but in the whole of France. Out of 87 areas into which

France is divided, in 68 the birth-rate is lower than the death-rate. In one case, *i. e.* Lot, deaths were 162 against 100 births. Next comes Tarn-et-Garonne with 156 deaths against 100 births. Even out of 19 areas where the birth-rate is higher than the death-rate, the difference is negligible in several cases. In ten areas alone is there an effective difference. The lowest death-rate, that is 77 against 100 births, occurs in Morbihan and Pas-de-Calais. M. Bureau shows that this process of depopulation, which he calls 'voluntary death', has not yet been arrested.

M. Bureau then examines the condition of French Provinces in detail and he quotes the following paragraph from M. Gide written in 1914 about Normandy: "Normandy has lost in the course of 50 years more than 300,000 inhabitants, that is to say, a population equal to that of the whole department of the Orne. Every 20 years she now loses the equivalent of a department, and as she includes but five, a century will be enough to see her fat meadows empty of Frenchmen — I say advisedly of Frenchmen, for assuredly others will come to occupy them, and it would be a pity were it otherwise. Germans work the iron mines round Caen, and for the first time, only yesterday, a vanguard of Chinese labourers landed where William the Conqueror set sail for England." And M. Bureau adds by way of comment on:



the paragraph. "How many other provinces are in no better condition!"

He then goes on to show that this deterioration in population has inevitably led to the deterioration in the military strength of the nation. He believes that the cessation of emigration from France is also due to the same cause. He then traces to the same cause the decay of French colonial expansion, the decay of French commerce and the French language and culture.

M. Bureau then asks, "Are the French people who have rejected the ancient sexual discipline more advanced in securing happiness, material prosperity, physical health and in intellectual culture?" He answers, "With regard to the improvement in health, a few words will suffice. However strong our wish to answer all objections methodically, it is all the same very difficult to take seriously the assertion that sexual 'emancipation' would tend to strengthen one's body and improve one's health. On every side one hears of the diminished vigour of both young people and adults. Before the war the military authorities had to lower time after time the physical standard of the recruits, and the power of endurance has seriously diminished throughout the whole nation. Doubtless it would be unjust to maintain that lack of moral discipline is alone responsible for this decline, but it has a large share in it, together with alcoholism,

insanitary housing, etc.; and if we look closely we shall easily discover that this indiscipline and the sentiments which perpetuate it are the strongest allies of these other scourges. . . . The frightful extension of venereal diseases has done incalculable injury to the public health. ”

M. Bureau even disputes the theory advanced by Neo-malthusians that wealth of individuals in a society which regulates its births increases in proportion to the restriction it imposes upon them, and fortifies his answer by comparing the favourable German birth-rate and her increasing material prosperity with the decreasing birth-rate of France side by side with its decreasing wealth. Nor has the phenomenal expansion of trade in Germany, M. Bureau contends, been attained at the cost of the workmen more than elsewhere. He quotes M. Rossignol: ‘ People died of hunger in Germany when she had but 41,000,000 inhabitants: they have become richer and richer since she numbered 68,000,000, ’ and adds, “ These people, who are by no means ascetics, found it possible to place annually in the savings-banks sums which in 1911 amounted to 22,000 million francs; while in 1895 the deposits only reached 8,000 millions; an increase of 850 millions a year. ”

The following paragraph which M. Bureau writes about the general culture of Germany after

describing its technical progress will be read with much interest:

“ Without being initiated into the depths of sociology one can have no doubt of it, for it is quite evident, that such technical progress would have been impossible had not workmen of a more refined type, foremen more highly educated, perfectly trained engineers been found. . . . The industrial schools are of three kinds: professional, numbering over 500, with 70,000 pupils; technical, still more numerous, and some of them with over 1,000 pupils; lastly, the colleges devoted to higher instruction with their 15,000 pupils, which confer like the Universities the envied title of doctor. . . . 365 commercial schools attract 31,000 pupils and in innumerable schools courses of agriculture give instruction to over 90,000. What, compared with these 400,000 pupils in the different lines of the production of wealth, are the 35,000 pupils of our professional courses, and why, since 1,770,000, of our people, of whom 779,798 are below eighteen years of age, live by the cultivation of the soil, are there but 3,255 pupils in our special schools of agriculture ? ” M. Bureau is careful enough to note that all this phenomenal rise of Germany is not entirely due to the surplus of births over deaths, but, he does contend with justice that given other favourable conditions a preponderating birthrate is an indispensable condition of national growth.

Indeed, the proposition he has set forth to prove is that a growing birth-rate is in no way inconsistent with great material prosperity and moral progress. We in India are not in the position of France so far as our birth-rate is concerned. But it may be said that the preponderating birth-rate in India, unlike as in Germany, is no advantage to our national growth. But I must not anticipate the chapter that will have to be set apart for a consideration of Indian conditions in the light of M. Bureau's facts and figures and conclusions.

After dealing with an examination of German conditions where the birth-rate preponderates over the death-rate, M. Bureau says, "Are we not aware that France occupies the fourth place — and that a very long way below the third — in regard to the total sum of national wealth? France has an annual revenue from her investments of 25,000 million francs, while the Germans are drawing from their investments a revenue estimated at 50,000 million francs. . . . Our national soil has suffered, in thirty-five years from 1879 to 1914, a depreciation of 40,000 million francs, and is worth only 52,000 instead of 92,000 millions! Whole departments of the country lack men to work the soil, and there are districts where one sees scarcely any but old men." He adds that "moral indiscipline and systematic sterility means the diminution of natural abilities

in the community, and the undisputed predominance of the old men in social life. . . . In France, there are but 170 children and young people to every 1000 inhabitants, while, in Germany, there are 220, in England, 210. . . . The proportion of the old is greater than it should be and the others who are prematurely aged through moral indiscipline and voluntary sterility share in all the senile fears of a debilitated race."

The author then observes, "We know that the immense majority of French people are indifferent to this domestic position (slack morals) of their rulers, thanks to the convenient theory of the 'well round private life.'" And he quotes with sorrow the following observation of M. Leopold Monod :

"It is a fine thing to go to war in order to cast down infamous abuses, and to break the chains of those who suffer from them. But how about men whose fears have not known how to guard their consciences from enticements; men whose courage is at the mercy of a caress or a fit of sulks; . . . men who with no shame, perhaps glorying in the exploit, repudiate the vow which in a joyous and solemn hour they made to the wife of their youth; men who burden their home with the tyranny of an exaggerated and selfish egotism — how can such men be liberators ? "

The author then sums up:

“ Thus, whichever way we turn, we always find that the various forms of our moral indiscipline have caused serious hurt to the individual, the family, and society at large, and have inflicted on us suffering which is literally inexpressible. The licentious conduct of our young people, prostitution, pornography, and marriages for money, vanity or luxury, adultery and divorce, voluntary sterility and abortion, have debilitated the nation and stopped its increase; the individual has been unable to conserve his energies, and the quality of the new growth has diminished simultaneously with its quantity. ‘ Fewer births and more fine men ’ was the watch-word, which had something enticing about it for those who, shut up in their materialistic conception of individual and social life, thought they could assimilate the breeding of men to that of sheep or horses. As Auguste Comte said with stinging force, these pretended physicians of our social ills would have done better to become veterinary surgeons, incapable as they always were of comprehending the infinite complexity of the psychology both of the individual and of the society.

“ The truth is, that of all the attitudes which a man adopts, of all the decisions at which he arrives, of all the habits which he contracts, there is none which exerts over his

personal and social life an influence comparable to that exerted by his attitudes, his decisions, and his habits with regard to the appeals of the sexual appetite. Whether he resists and controls them, or whether he yields and allows himself to be controlled by them, the most remote regions of social life will experience the echo of his action, since nature has ordained that the most hidden and intimate action should produce infinite repercussions.

“ Thanks to this very mystery, we like to persuade ourselves, when we violate in any way the moral discipline, that our misdeed will have no grievous consequence. As to ourselves, in the first place, we are satisfied, since our own interest or pleasure has been the motive of our action : as to society at large, we think it is so high above our modest selves that it will not even notice our misdeeds : and, above all, we secretly hope that ‘ the others ’ will have the sense to remain devout and virtuous. The worst of it is that this cowardly calculation almost succeeds while our conduct is as yet an abnormal and exceptional act ; then, proud of our success, we persevere in our attitude, and when there is occasion we come — and this is our supreme punishment — to believe it lawful.

“ But a day comes when the example given by this conduct involves other defections ; each of our evil deeds has the result of making more

difficult and more heroic that attachment to virtue which we have counted on in 'the others', and our neighbour, tired of being duped, is now in a hurry to imitate us. That day the downfall begins and each can estimate at once the consequences of his misdeeds and the extent of his responsibilities. . . .

"The secret act has come out of the hiding-place in which we thought it was confined. Endowed in its own way with a kind of immaterial radio-activity, it has run through all sections; all suffer from the fault of each, because the influence of our actions, like the wavelets spreading from an eddy, makes itself felt in the most remote regions of the general social life. . . .

"Moral indiscipline at once dries up the fountains of the race, and hastens the wear and tear of the adults whom it debilitates both morally and physically."

#### IV

Having dealt with the indiscipline of morals and its aggravation by the use of contraceptives and its terrible results the author proceeds to examine the remedies. I must pass over the portions that deal with legislative measures, their necessity and yet utter inefficiency. He then discusses the necessity, by a careful education of public opinion, of the duty of chastity for the



unmarried, the duty of marriage for that vast mass of mankind that cannot for ever restrain their animal passions, the duty, having once married, of conjugal fidelity and the duty of continence in marriage. He examines the argument against chastity that its 'precept is against the physiological nature of man and woman and injurious to the happy equilibrium of their health,' and that it is 'an intolerable attack on the freedom and autonomy of the individual, his right to happiness and to live his life in his own way.'

The author contests the doctrine that 'the organ of generation is like the rest' requiring satisfaction. 'If it were,' he says, 'an organ like the others, how could we explain the absolute inhibitory power which the will possesses over it? or the fact that the awakening of sensuality, which pharisaism calls the sexual necessity, is the result of the innumerable excitements which our civilisation provides for young boys and girls several years before normal adult age?'

I cannot resist the temptation of copying the following valuable medical testimony collected in the book in support of the proposition that self-restraint is not only not harmful but necessary for the promotion of health and perfectly possible :

"The sexual instinct," says Oesterlen, Professor at Tübingen University, "is not so blindly all-powerful that it cannot be controlled, and

even subjugated entirely, by moral strength and reason. The young man, like the young woman, should learn to control himself until the proper time. He must know that robust health and ever-renewed vigour will be the reward of this voluntary sacrifice.

“ One cannot repeat too often that abstinence and the most absolute purity are perfectly compatible with the laws of physiology and morality, and that sexual indulgence is no more justified by physiology and psychology than by morality and religion.”

“ The example of the best and noblest among men,” says Sir Lionel Beale, Professor at the Royal College in London, “ has at all times proved that the most imperious of instincts can be effectively resisted by a strong and serious will, and by sufficient care as to manner of life and occupation. Sexual abstinence has never yet hurt any man when it has been observed, not only through exterior restrictive causes, but as a voluntary rule of conduct. Virginity, in fine, is not too hard to observe, provided that it is the physical expression of a certain state of mind. . . . Chastity implies, not only continence, but also purity of sentiments, the energy which is the result of deep convictions.”

“ Every kind of nervous activity,” says the Swiss psychologist, Forel, who discusses sexual anomalies with a moderation equal to his

knowledge, "is increased and strengthened by exercise. On the other hand, inactivity in a particular region reduces the effects of the exciting causes which correspond to it.

"All causes of sexual disturbance increase the intensity of desire. By avoiding these provocations it becomes less sensitive, and the desire gradually diminishes. The idea is current among young people that continence is something abnormal and impossible, and yet the many who observe it prove that chastity can be practised without prejudice to the health."

"I know," says Ribbing, "a number of men of 25, 30 and older than that, who have observed perfect continence, or who when they married had done so up to that time. Such cases are not rare: only they don't advertise themselves.

"I have received many confidences from students, healthy both in body and mind, who have remonstrated with me for not having sufficiently insisted on the ease with which sensual desires can be ruled."

"Before marriage, absolute continence can and ought to be observed by young men," says Dr. Acton. "Chastity no more injures the body than the soul," declares Sir James Paget, Physician to the English Court; "Discipline is better than any other line of conduct."

"It is a singularly false notion," writes Dr. E. Pèrier, "and one which must be fought against, since it besets not only the children's mind, but that of the fathers as well: the notion of imaginary dangers in absolute continence. Virginity is a physical, moral, and intellectual safe-guard to young men."

"Continence," says Sir Andrew Clarke, "does no harm, it does not hinder development, it increases energy and enlivens perception. Incontinence weakens self-control, creates habits of slackness, dulls and degrades the whole being, and lays it open to diseases which can be transmitted to several generations. To say that incontinence is necessary to the health of young men is not only an error, but a cruelty. It is at once false and hurtful."

"The evils of incontinence are well-known and undisputed," writes Dr. Surbled: "those produced by continence are imaginary; what proves this is the fact of the many learned and voluminous works devoted to the explanation of the former, while the latter still await their historian. As to these latter there are but vague assertions, which hide themselves, for very shame, in mere talk, but which will not endure the daylight."

"I have never seen," writes Dr. Montegazzari in *La Physiologie de l'amour*, "a disease produced by chastity. . . . All men, and especially

young men, can experience the immediate benefits of chastity. "

Dr. Delbois, the famous professor of neuropathology at Berne, affirms that " there are more victims of neurasthenia among those who give free rein to their sensuality than among those who know how to escape from the yoke of mere animalism: " and his witness is fully confirmed by that of Dr. Féré, physician at the Bicêtre Hospital, who testifies that those who are capable of psychic chastity can maintain their continence without any fear for their health, which does not depend on the satisfaction of the sexual instinct.

" There has been unfitting and light talk," writes Professor Alfred Fournier, " about ' the dangers of continence for the young man. ' I can assure you that if these dangers exist I know nothing about them, and that as a physician I am still without proof of their existence, though I have had every opportunity in the way of subjects under my professional observation.

" Besides this, as a physiologist I will add that true virility is not attained before the age of twenty-one, or thereabouts, and the sexual necessity does not obtrude itself before that period, especially if unhealthy excitements have not aroused it prematurely. Sexual precocity is merely artificial, and is most often the result of ill-directed up-bringing.

" In any case, be sure that danger of this kind lies far less in restraining than in anticipating the natural tendency; you know what I mean. "

Lastly, after these most authoritative testimonies, to which it would be easy to add many others, M. Bureau quotes the resolution unanimously voted at Brussels in 1902 by the 102 members present at the second General Congress of the International Conference of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis, a congress which assembled together the most competent authorities on the subject throughout the world: " Young men must above all be taught that chastity and continence are not only not harmful, but also that these virtues are among those to be most earnestly recommended from the purely medical and hygienic standpoint. "

M. Bureau then proceeds:

" There was also a unanimous declaration issued by the professors of the Medical Faculty of Christiania University, a few years ago: ' The assertion that a chaste life will be prejudicial to the health rests, according to our unanimous experience, on no foundation. We have no knowledge of any harm resulting from a pure and moral life. '

" The case has therefore been heard, and sociologists and moralists can repeat with

M. Ruyssen this elementary and physiological truth, 'that the sexual appetite does not need, like the requirements of aliment and exercise, a minimum of necessary satisfaction. It is a fact that man or woman can lead a chaste life without experiencing, except in the case of a few abnormal subjects, serious disturbance or even painful inconvenience. It has been said, — and cannot be too often repeated, since such an elementary truth can be so widely disregarded, — that no disease ever comes through continence to normal subjects, who form the immense majority, while many diseases, very well known and very serious, are the results of incontinence. Nature has provided in the most simple and infallible way for the excess of nutrition which is represented by the seminal fluid and the menstrual flux.'

"Dr. Viry is therefore right in denying that the question is one of a true instinct or a real need. 'Every one knows what it would cost him not to satisfy the need of nourishment or to suppress respiration, but no one quotes any pathological consequences, either acute or chronic, as having followed either temporary or absolute continence....In normal life we see the example of chaste men who are neither less virile in character, nor less energetic in will, nor less robust, than others, nor less fitted to become fathers if they marry..... A need which can be subject to such variations, an instinct which

accommodates itself so well to lack of satisfaction, is neither a need nor an instinct.'

"Sexual relationship is far from answering to any physiological need of the growing boy; quite the contrary, it is perfect chastity which is sternly required by the exigencies of his normal growth and development, and those who violate it cause irreparable injury to their health. 'The attainment of puberty is accompanied by great changes, a veritable disturbance of various functions, and a general development. The adolescent boy needs all his vital strength, for during this period there is often a weakening of the resistance to sickness: disease and mortality are higher than in the earlier period. .... The long work of general growth, of organic evolution, that whole series of physical and psychic changes, at the end of which the child becomes a man, involves a toilsome effort of nature. At that moment, all over-driving is dangerous, but especially the premature exercise of the sexual function.' "

## V

After dealing with the physiological benefits of chastity M. Bureau quotes the following passage from Professor Montegazza on its moral and intellectual advantages:

"All men, and young men in particular, can experience the immediate benefit of chastity.



The memory is quiet and tenacious, the brain lively and fertile, the will energetic, the whole character gains a strength of which libertines have no conception; no prism shows us our surroundings under such heavenly colours as that of chastity, which lights up with its rays the least objects in the universe, and transports us into the purest joys of an abiding happiness that knows neither shadow nor decline." And the author adds: "The joy, the cordial merriment, the sunny confidence of vigorous young men who have remained chaste.....are an eloquent contrast to the restless obsessions and feverish excitement of their companions who are slaves to the demands of sensuality." He then compares the benefits of chastity with the 'miserable consequences of lust and debauchery.' "No disease," the author states, "could ever be quoted as the result of continence; who is not aware of the frightful diseases of which moral indiscipline is the source? . . . The body.....finds itself converted into an indescribable state of rottenness. ....Nor can we forget the worse defilement of imagination, heart and understanding. On every side we hear complaint of the lowering of character, the unbridled lust of youth, the overflowing of selfishness."

So much for the so-called necessity of sexual indulgence and the consequent liberty taken by the youth before marriage. The

protagonists of the doctrine of such indulgence further contend that restraint of the sexual passion is a restraint upon 'the freedom to dispose of one's own body.' The author shows by elaborate argument that restraint on individual freedom in the matter of sexual indulgence is a necessity from the standpoint of sociology and social psychology.

"In the eyes of sociologists," the author says, "social life is nothing but a net-work of multiform relations, nothing but an interlacing of actions and reactions, in the midst of which an activity, isolated and really separated from the rest, is unthinkable. On whatever step we resolve, whatever action we attempt, solidarity unites our resolution and our action to those of our brothers; and not even our most secret thought or most fugitive wish fails of an echo so distant that the mind is for ever incapable of measuring the distance. The social quality is not, in man, an adventitious or merely accessory quality: it is immanent, part of his humanity itself; he is a social being because he is a man. There is no other field of activity so truly our own: physiology and morality, economics and politics, the intellectual and aesthetic domains, the religious and the social, are all conditioned by a universal system of mysterious bonds and undefined relations. The bond is so firm, the net so closely meshed that sometimes the sociologist stands in

real trouble before this immensity which unfolds itself before him, across all time and space; he measures in one glance how great, under certain circumstances, is the responsibility of the individual, and how he risks becoming petty by a liberty which some social circles might be tempted to grant him."

"If," the author further says, "we can say that under certain circumstances I am not at liberty to spit in the street, . . . how can I claim the much more important right of disposing of my sexual energy as I like? Does that energy by a unique privilege escape the universal law of solidarity? Who does not see, on the contrary, that the sovereign importance of the function only increases the social reaction of the individual acts? Look at this young man and this girl who have just established that false union of which the reader knows the character; they are persuaded that the agreement concerns nobody but themselves. They shut themselves up in their independence, and pretend to believe that their intimate and secret action has no interest for society and is altogether beyond its control. A childish illusion! The social solidarity which unites the people of one nation, and, beyond the individual nations, all humanity, finds no difficulty in passing through all walls, even those of the secret chambers, and a terrible interrelation joins that supposed private action to

the most distant series of actions in that social life which it helps to disorganise. Whether he wills it or not, every individual who asserts his right to temporary or sterile sexual relations, who claims the liberty to use the reproductive energy with which he is endowed merely for his own enjoyment, spreads in society the germs of division and disorder. All deformed as they are by our selfishness and our disloyalties, our social institutions still take for granted that the individual will accept with good will the obligations inherent in the satisfaction of the reproductive appetite. It is by discounting this acceptance that society has built up its countless mechanisms of labour and property, of wages and inheritance, of taxation and military service, of the right of parliamentary suffrage and civil liberties. By his refusal to take his share the individual disorganises everything at one stroke, he violates the social pact in its very essence, and while he makes the burden heavier on others' shoulder, he is no better than an exploiter and a parasite, a thief and a swindler. We are responsible in the face of society for our physiological energy, as for all our energies, and, it might be said, even more than for all the others, since a society unarmed and almost wholly without external pressure is obliged to remit to our good will the care to use that energy judiciously, and conformably to the social good."

The author is equally strong on the psychological ground: "It was said long ago that liberty is in appearance an alleviation, in reality a burden. That is precisely its grandeur. Liberty binds and compels; it increases the sum of the efforts which each is bound to make. The individual desires to be free, he is all inflamed with the longing to realize himself in the expansion of his autonomy. The programme seems simple enough, and yet his first experiences are enough to show him its painful complexity. It is in vain that unity is the dominating characteristic of our nature and our moral life; we feel within us various and contradictory impulses; in each of them we are conscious of ourselves, and yet everything proves to us that we must choose between them. You say, young man, that you wish to live your own life, to realize yourself; but what part of yourself do you wish to realise, we ask with the great pedagogue, Foerster? Which is the better part, that which has its seat in the centre of your intellectual force, or that which occupies the lowest, the sensual, part of your nature? If it is true that progress in the individual and in society consists in a growing spiritualisation and in the ever more complete mastery of spirit over matter, the choice cannot be doubtful, but there must still be energy to act, and the undertaking is not

an easy one. Perhaps you will reply : But I do not choose, I wish to realize my being in one harmonious and organised whole. Very well ; but take care, this very resolution is a choice, for harmony is only established at the cost of strife. *Sterbe und Werde*, die and become, said Goethe, and the words are but the echo of others' spoken nineteen centuries ago by Christ, 'Amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.'

" 'We wish to be men — an easy thing to say,' writes M. Gabriel Séailles, 'but the right turns into duty, stern duty, in which no one does not fail more or less; we wish to be free, we announce it with a menacing air; if we call liberty doing as we like, the slavery of instinct, we need not be so proud of it; if we are speaking of the true liberty, let us gird up our loins and prepare ourselves for the unending fight. We talk about our unity, our identity, our liberty, and proudly conclude that we are immortal sons of God. Alas ! if we only try to seize this *Self*, it escapes our grasp, it resolves itself into a multitude of incoherent beings which deny each other, it is rent by contradictory desires which in turn constitute itself; it is wholly (its own essential being excepted) the prejudice to which it submits, the objects which tempt it; its pretended liberty is nothing but

' The illicit satisfaction of nascent passion is not only a moral fault, it is a terrible injury to the body. The new need becomes a tyrant if yielded to; a guilty complacency will listen to it, and make it more imperious; every fresh act will forge a new link in the chain of habit.

' Many have no longer strength to break it, and helplessly end in physical and intellectual ruin, slaves of a habit contracted often through ignorance rather than perversity. The best safeguard consists in cultivating within oneself purity of thought and discipline of one's whole being.' "

M. Bureau adds to the foregoing the following from Dr. Escande:

" As to sexual desire, we assert the intelligence and the will have absolute control over it. It is necessary to employ the term sexual *desire*, not *need*, for there is no question of a function, the non-accomplishment of which is incompatible with existence. Really, it is not a need at all; but many men are persuaded that it is. The interpretation they give to the desire makes them look on co-habitation as absolutely necessary. Now we cannot look on the sexual act as resulting from senile and passive obedience to natural laws. We are, on the contrary, concerned with a voluntary act, following on a determination or an acquiescence, often premeditated and prepared for."

## VI

After having insisted on chastity before and during marriage and shown by overwhelming proof that not only is self-restraint not impossible, not harmful but perfectly possible and wholly beneficial both to the mind and the body. M. Bureau devotes a chapter to the value and possibility of perpetual continence. The following opening paragraph is worth reproducing:

“In the first rank of these liberators, these heroes of the true sexual emancipation, it is only right to name the young men and women who, the better to devote themselves to the service of a great cause, choose to remain all their life in chastity, and renounce the joys of marriage. The reasons for their resolve vary according to circumstances; one feels it a duty to remain with an infirm father or mother; another takes the place, to orphaned brothers and sisters, of the departed parents; another desires to devote himself or herself entirely to the service of science or of art, of the poor or the sick, or to a work of moral education or of prayer. Similarly, the merit of the voluntary sacrifice may be greater or less; some, thanks to the benefits of a wise protective education and the practice of a good moral hygiene, are



almost without sensual temptations; others, more advanced in the path of virtue, have succeeded, it may be at the cost of sharp conflicts of which they alone know the hardness, in mastering the beast and taming the flesh. On any supposition, the final resolve is the same: these men and women have been led to think that the best way for them to serve is not to marry; and they have entered into an engagement, it may be with themselves, it may be with God, to remain in the perfect chastity of the celibate life. However definite and undoubted may be the duty of marriage, as we shall see, under certain circumstances, all these resolutions are legitimate, because they are inspired by a noble and generous purpose. 'Painting is a jealous mistress who suffers no rival,' replied Michael Angelo when marriage was suggested to him; and how many after him have had a like experience ! "

I can corroborate this testimony from the experience of European friends of almost every description given by M. Bureau, friends, who exercised perpetual restraint. It is only in India that from childhood we must hear of marriages. Parents have no other thought, no other ambition save that of seeing their children well married and provided for. The one thing brings premature decay of mind and body and the other induces idleness and often makes of one a parasite. We exaggerate the difficulty of chastity and voluntary

poverty and impute extraordinary merit to them, reserve them for *mahatmas* and *yogis* and rule the latter out of ordinary life, forgetting that real *mahatmya* and *yoga* are unthinkable in a society where the ordinary level is brought down to the mudbank. On the principle that evil like the hare travels faster than good which like the tortoise though steady goes slow, voluptuousness of the West comes to us with lightning speed and with all its variegated enchantment dazzles and blinds us to the realities of life. We are almost ashamed of chastity and are in danger of looking upon self-imposed poverty as a crime in the face of the Western splendour that descends upon us from minute to minute through the cable and day to day through the steamers that discharge their cargo on our shores. But the West is not wholly what we see in India. Even as the South African Whites ill-judge us when they judge us through the Indian settlers, so shall we ill-judge the West through the human and the other Western cargo that delivers itself to us everyday. There is in the West a small but inexhaustible reservoir of purity and strength which those who have eyes of penetration may see beneath the deceptive surface. Throughout the European desert there are oases from which those who will may drink the purest water of life. Chastity and voluntary poverty are adopted without brag, without bluster, and in all humility by hundreds of men and

women, often for no other than the all-sufficing cause of service of some dear one or of the country. We often prate about spirituality as if it had nothing to do with the ordinary affairs of life and had been reserved for anchorites lost in the Himalayan forests or concealed in some inaccessible Himalayan cave. Spirituality that has no bearing on and produces no effect on everyday life is 'an airy nothing.' Let young men and women for whose sake *Young India* is written from week to week know that it is their duty, if they would purify the atmosphere about them and shed their weakness, to be and remain chaste and know too that it is not so difficult as they have been taught to imagine.

Let us further listen to M. Bureau: "In proportion as it ( modern sociology ) follows the evolution of our manners, and as methodical study digs more deeply the soil of social realities, the better is the value perceived of the help which the practice of perpetual chastity brings to the great work of the discipline of the senses." "If marriage is the normal state of life for the immense majority of people, it cannot be that all can, or ought to, marry. Even putting aside the exceptional vocations of which we have just spoken, there are at least three classes of celibates who cannot be blamed for not being married: the young people of both sexes who for professional or economic reasons think it a duty to defer

their marriage; the people who are involuntarily condemned to celibacy because they cannot find a suitable partner; finally, those who ought to abstain from marriage in consequence of their physiological defects that could be transmitted, and who are in some cases strictly bound to renounce all idea of it. Is it not evident, then, that the renunciation made by these people, doubly necessary both for their own happiness and the interest of society, will be rendered so much the less painful and so much the more cheerful, because they will find beside them others who, in full possession of their physical and intellectual vigour and sometimes with abundant means, have declared their firm resolution to remain celibate all their lives? These voluntary and choice celibates, who have willed to consecrate themselves to God without reserve, to prayer and to the training of the souls, declare that in their eyes celibacy, far from being a reduced condition of life, is on the contrary a superior state, in which man asserts, in its plenitude, the mastery of will over instinct."

"To young people of both the sexes," says the author, "who are still too young to marry, perpetual celibacy shows that it is possible to pass one's youth chastely; to the married it recalls the duty which lies upon them to maintain exact discipline in their conjugal relations and never to allow a consideration of self-interest,

however legitimate it may be in itself, to prevail over the higher demands of moral generosity and loyalty."

"The vow of the voluntary celibate," says Foerster, "far from degrading marriage, is on the contrary the best support of the sanctity of the conjugal bond, since it represents in a concrete form man's freedom in the face of the pressure of his nature. It acts like a conscience with regard to passing whims and sensual assaults. Celibacy is also a protection to marriage in the sense that its existence prevents married people from looking upon themselves in their mutual relations as mere slaves to obscure natural forces, and it leads them to take openly, in the face of nature, the position of free beings who are capable of mastery. Those who scoff at perpetual celibacy as unnatural or impossible do not know really what they are doing. They fail to see that the line of thought which makes them talk as they do must necessarily lead, by strict logic, to prostitution and polygamy. If the demand of nature is irresistible, how can a chaste life be required of married people? And lastly, they forget the great number of marriages in which, it may be for several months or years, or even for life, one of the spouses is condemned to a real celibacy by the sickness or other disability of the partner. For this reason alone, true monogamy rises or falls with the esteem that is paid to celibacy."

## VII

The chapter on perpetual continence is followed by chapters on the duty and indissolubility of marriage. Whilst the author contends that perpetual continence is the highest state, it is not possible for the multitude for whom marriage must be regarded as a duty. He shows that if the function and limitations of marriage are rightly understood, there never can be any advocacy of contraceptives. It is the wrong moral training that has brought about the prevalent moral indiscipline. Having dealt with the opinion of 'advanced' writers ridiculing marriage the author says :

"Happily for future generations, this opinion of pseudo-moralists and of writers who are often utterly lacking in moral sense, and equally so sometimes in the real literary spirit, is very far from being that of the true psychologists and sociologists of our time; and in nothing is the rupture more complete between the noisy world of the press, the novel and the stage, and that other world where thought is cultivated, and the mysterious elements of our psychological and social life are studied in detail."

M. Bureau rejects the argument of free love. He holds with Modestin that 'marriage is the union of man and woman, the association of all life, the communication of divine and human rights of law.' Marriage is.

not a 'mere civil contract' but a sacrament, a 'moral obligation.' It has succeeded in 'making the gorilla stand erect.' 'It is a great mistake to imagine that everything is permissible to those lawfully married, and even supposing that husband and wife ordinarily respect the moral law as to transmission of life, it is untrue that it is lawful to *add* other modes of sexual intercourse which please them. This prohibition is as much in their interest as in that of the society of which their marriage ought to be the maintenance and development.' The author holds that "the ever renewed opportunities of deviation from strict discipline which marriage affords to the sexual instinct are a constant menace to true love. This peril can only be exorcised by watchfulness to keep the satisfaction of the sexual appetite within the limits defined by the very ends of marriage." "It is always dangerous," says St. Francis of Sales, "to take too violent medicines, since if one takes more than should be taken, or if they are not well made up, much harm is done; marriage has been blessed and ordained partly as a remedy for concupiscence, and it is undoubtedly a very good remedy, but all the same a violent one, and consequently very dangerous if not discreetly used."

The author then combats the theory of individual liberty to contract or break the marriage bond at will or to live frankly a life of indulgence

without its consequent obligation. He insists on monogamy and says :

"It is untrue that the individual is at liberty to contract marriage or to remain in selfish celibacy, as he pleases; still less are duly married people free to agree together to the rupture of their union. Their freedom is shown when they choose each other, and each is bound to choose only with full knowledge, after careful thought, the one with whom he believes he can assume the responsibilities of the new life he is entering. But as soon as the marriage has been accomplished and consummated, the act performed involves, far away and in all directions, incalculable consequences which extend infinitely beyond the two persons who have brought them about. These consequences may be unperceived, in a time of anarchic individualism such as ours, by the spouses themselves, but their importance is certified by the grave sufferings which come upon the whole body social, as soon as the stability of the home is shaken, as soon as the variable caprice of the sensual appetite takes the place of the beneficent discipline of the positive monogamic union. To one who is conscious of these indefinitely extended repercussions and these subtle connections, it matters little to know, that since all human institutions are subject to the universal law of evolution, that of marriage must certainly, like all the rest, undergo in its turn necessary



transformations, since there can be no doubt that progress in this direction can only take the form of eventually drawing more closely the marriage bond. The attacks now made on the rule of the indissolubility of marriage, when divorce is asked for by mutual consent, will only bring into more prominent relief the social value of a rule against which protest is made, and as the years roll by, this rule, which for some centuries, when its social value could not yet be appreciated, was simply a prescription of religious discipline, will appear more and more as a principle as beneficial to the individual as it is salutary for society at large.

“The rule of indissolubility is not an arbitrary adornment; on the contrary, it is bound up with the most delicate mechanism of the individual and collective social life; and since people talk about evolution, they should ask on what condition this indefinite progress of the race, which all agree to desire, is possible. Writes Foerster: ‘The deepening of the sense of responsibility, the training of the individual towards autonomous discipline willingly consented to, the growth of patience and charity, the control of selfishness, the maintenance of the emotional life against the elements that make for dissolution and the impulse of passing caprice—all these are elements in man’s interior life which we are entitled to consider the absolute and permanent conditions of all higher social culture, and on this

account exempt from all such disorder as might result from a serious change in economic conditions. To tell the truth, economic progress is itself closely bound up with general social progress, for economic security and success depends in the long run on the sincerity and loyalty of our social co-operation. Every economic modification which ignores these fundamental conditions is self-condemned. If we wish, therefore, to take up the study, at once both moral and social, of the absolute value of the various methods of sexual relations, the following question is decisive; What method is the best adapted to the deepening and strengthening of our whole social life? Which is the most capable, at the different periods of life, of developing to the utmost the sense of responsibility, self-abnegation and sacrifice, of most effectively restraining undisciplined selfishness and capricious frivolity? When the matter is viewed from this standpoint, there is not the slightest doubt that monogamy, because of its social and educative value, must form part of the permanent heritage of all more advanced civilisation; and true progress will draw more closely, rather than relax, the marriage bond. . . . The family is the centre of all human preparation for the social life, that is to say all preparation for responsibility, sympathy, self-control, mutual tolerance, and reciprocal training. And the family only fills this central place because it lasts all through life and is indissoluble, and

because, thanks to this permanence, the common family life becomes deeper, more stable, more adapted to men's mutual intercourse than any other. It may be said that monogamic marriage is the conscience of all human social life. ' "

He quotes Auguste Comte: "Our hearts are so changeable that society must intervene to hold in check the vacillation and caprices which would otherwise drag down human existence to be nothing but a series of unworthy and pointless experiences. "

" A fiction, " writes Dr. Toulouse, " which often hinders the happiness of married people, is that the instinct of love is a tyrant and must be satisfied at any price. . . . Now the very characteristic quality of man, and the apparent end of his evolution, is an ever growing independence of his appetites. The child learns to master his coarser needs, and the adult to overcome his passions. This scheme of all good upbringing is not chimerical, nor something outside practical life. For the end of our nature is precisely to be subject, in great degree, to the personal tendencies which constitute our will. What one shelters behind as 'temperament' is usually nothing but weakness. The man who is really strong knows how to use his powers at the right time. "

## VIII

It is now time to conclude this series of articles. It is not necessary to pursue M. Bureau in his examination of the doctrine of Malthus who startled his generation by his theory of over-population and his advocacy of birth control if the human species was not to be extinct. Malthus, however, advocated continence, whereas Neo-Malthusianism advocates not restraint but the use of chemical and mechanical means to avoid the consequences of animal indulgence. M. Bureau heartily accepts the doctrine of birth control by moral means, *i. e.* self-restraint, and, as we have seen, rejects and vigorously condemns the use of chemical or mechanical means. The author then examines the condition of the working classes and the proportion of birth among them and finally closes the book by examining the means of checking the practice of grossest immoralities under the name of individual freedom and even humanity. He suggests organised attempt to guide and regulate the public opinion and advocates State interference but finally relies upon quickening of the religious life. Moral bankruptcy cannot be met or arrested by ordinary methods, most certainly not when immorality is claimed as a virtue and morality condemned as a weakness, superstition or even immorality. For many advocates of contraceptives do indeed condemn continence as unnecessary and even

harmful. In this state of things religious aid is the only effective check upon licensed vice. Religion here may not be taken in its narrow, parochial sense. True religion is the greatest disturbing factor in life whether individual or collective. A religious awakening constitutes a revolution, a transformation, a regeneration. And nothing but some such dynamic force can positively prevent the moral catastrophe towards which, in M. Bureau's estimation, France seems to be moving.

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But we must here leave the author and his book. French conditions are not Indian conditions. Ours is a somewhat different problem. Contraceptives are not universal in India. Their use has hardly touched the educated classes. The use of contraceptives in India, is, in my opinion, unwarranted by any single condition that can be named. Do middle class parents suffer from too many children? Individual instances will not suffice to make out a case for excessive birth-rate among the middle classes. The cases in India where I have observed the advocacy of these methods are those of widows and young wives. Thus in the one case it is illegitimate birth that is to be avoided, not the secret intercourse. In the other, it is again pregnancy that is to be feared, and not the rape, of a girl of tender age. Then there remains the class of diseased, weak, effeminate young men who

would indulge in excesses with their own wives or others' wives and would avoid the consequences of acts which they know to be sinful. The cases of men or women in full vigour of life desiring intercourse and yet wishing to avoid the burden of children are, I make bold to say, rare in this ocean of Indian humanity. Let them not parade their cases to justify and advocate a practice that in India, if it became general, is bound to ruin the youth of the country. A highly artificial education has robbed the nation's youth of physical and mental vigour. We are off-spring in many cases of child marriages. Our disregard of the laws of health and sanitation has undermined our bodies. Our wrong and deficient dietary composed of corroding spices has produced a collapse of the digestive apparatus. We need, not lessons in the use of contraceptives and helps to our being able to satisfy our animal appetite, but continuous lessons to restrain that appetite, in many cases even to the extent of absolute continence. We need to be taught by precept and example that continence is perfectly possible and imperatively necessary if we are not to remain mentally and physically weak. We need to be told from the housetop that if we will not be a nation of manikins, we must conserve and add to the limited vital energy we are daily dissipating. Our young widows need to be told not to sin secretly but come out boldly and openly to demand marriage which is their right as much

as that of young widowers. We need to cultivate public opinion that shall make child marriages impossible. The vacillation, and the disinclination to do hard and sustained work, the physical inability to perform strenuous labours, collapses of enterprises brilliantly begun, the want of originality, one notices so often, are due largely to excessive indulgence. I hope young men do not deceive themselves into the belief that when there is no procreation the mere indulgence does not matter, does not weaken. Indeed the sexual act, with the unnatural safeguard against procreation, is likely to be far more exhausting than such act performed with a full sense of the responsibility attached to it.

“ The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.”

If we begin to believe that indulgence in animal passion is necessary, harmless and sinless, we shall want to give reins to it and shall be powerless to resist it. Whereas if we educate ourselves to believe that such indulgence is harmful, sinful, unnecessary and can be controlled, we shall discover that self-restraint is perfectly possible. Let us beware of the strong wine of libertinism that the intoxicated West sends us under the guise of new truth and so-called human freedom. Let us, on the contrary, listen to the sober voice from the West, that through the rich experience of its wise men at times percolates

to us, *i. e.* if we have outgrown the ancient wisdom of our forefathers.

Charlie Andrews has sent me an informing article on *Generation and Regeneration* written by William Loftus Hare and published in *The Open Court* [March 1926].\* It is a closely reasoned scientific essay. He shows that all bodies perform two functions: '*viz.* internal reproduction for the building up of the body and external reproduction for the continuance of the species.' These processes he names regeneration and generation respectively. "The regenerative process—internal reproduction—is fundamental for the individual and therefore necessary and primary, the generative process is due to a superfluity of cells and is therefore secondary. . . . The law of life, then, at this level is to feed the germ cells firstly for regeneration and secondly for generation. In case of deficiency regeneration must take the first place and generation be suspended. Thus we may learn the origin of the suspension of reproduction and follow it to its later phases of human continence and asceticism generally. Inner reproduction can never be suspended except at the cost of death, the normal origin of which is thus also discerned." After describing the biological process of regeneration the writer states: "Among civilised human beings

\* See Appendix, page 113.



sexual intercourse is practised vastly more than is necessary for the production of the next generation and is carried on at the expense of internal reproduction, bringing disease, death and more in its train."

No one who knows anything of Hindu philosophy can have difficulty in following this paragraph from Mr. Hare's essay :

"The process of regeneration is not and cannot be mechanistic in character, but like the primitive fission is vitalistic. That is to say, it exhibits intelligence and will. To suppose that life separates, differentiates and segregates by a process that is purely mechanistic is inconceivable. True, these fundamental processes are so far removed from our present consciousness as to seem to be uncontrolled by the human or animal will. But a moment's reflection will show that just as the will of the fully developed human being directs his external movements and actions in accordance with the guidance of the intellect, — this, indeed, being its function,— so the earlier processes of the gradual organisation of the body must, within the limits provided by environment, be allowed to be directed by a kind of will guided by a kind of intelligence. This is now known to psychologists as 'the unconscious.' It is a part of our self, disconnected from our normal daily thinking, but intensely awake and alert in regard to its own functions—so much so that it

never for a moment sub-sides into sleep as the consciousness does."

Who can measure the almost irreparable harm done to the unconscious and more permanent part of our being by the sexual act indulged in for its own sake? 'The nemesis of reproduction is death. The sexual act is essentially katabolic (or a movement towards death) in the male and in parturition of the offspring it is katabolic for the female.' Hence the writer contends: "Virility, vitality and immunity from disease are the normal lot of nearly or quite continent persons." "Withdrawal of germ cells from their upward regenerative course for generative or merely indulgent purposes deprives the organs of their replenishing stock of life, to their cost slowly and ultimately." "It is these physical facts which constitute the basis of a personal sexual ethic, counselling moderation, if not restraint—at any rate, explaining the origin of restraint." The author, as can be easily imagined, is opposed to birth control by chemical and mechanical means. He says: "It removes all prudential motives for self-restraint and makes it possible for sexual indulgence in marriage to be limited only by the diminution of desire or the advance of old age. Apart from this, however, it inevitably has an influence outside the marriage relation. It opens the door for irregular, promiscuous and unfruitful unions,

which, from the point of view of modern industry, sociology and politics, are full of danger. I cannot go into these here. It is sufficient to say that by 'contraception, inordinate sexual indulgence both in and out of marriage is facilitated, and if I am right in my foregoing physiological arguments, evil must come to both individuals and the race. "

Let the Indian youth treasure in their hearts the quotation with which M. Bureau's book ends:

" The future is for the nations who are chaste. "

## Birth Control\*

It is not without the greatest hesitation and reluctance that I approach this subject. The question of using artificial methods for birth control has been referred to me by correspondents ever since my return to India. Though I have answered them personally, I have never hitherto dealt with the subject publicly. My attention was drawn to the subject, now thirty-five years ago, when I was a student in England. There was then a hot controversy raging between a purist who would not countenance anything but natural means and a doctor who advocated artificial means. It was at that early time in my life that I became, after leanings for a brief period towards artificial means, a convinced opponent of them. I now observe that in some Hindi papers the methods are described in a revoltingly open manner which shocks one's sense of decency. I observe, too, that one writer does not hesitate to cite my name as among the supporters of artificial methods of birth control. I cannot recall a single occasion when I spoke or wrote in favour of such methods. I have seen

\* Reprinted from *Young India*, March 12, 1925.

also two distinguished names having been used in support. I hesitate to publish them without reference to their owners.

There can be no two opinions about the necessity of birth control. But the only method handed down from ages past is self-control or Brahmacharya. It is an infallible sovereign remedy doing good to those who practise it. And medical men will earn the gratitude of mankind, if instead of devising artificial means of birth control they will find out the means of self-control. The union is meant not for pleasure but for bringing forth progeny. And union is a crime when the desire for progeny is absent.

Artificial methods are like putting a premium upon vice. They make man and woman reckless. And respectability that is being given to the methods must hasten the dissolution of the restraints that public opinion puts upon one. Adoption of artificial methods must result in imbecility and nervous prostration. The remedy will be found to be worse than the disease. It is wrong and immoral to seek to escape the consequences of one's acts. It is good for a person who over-eats to have an ache and a fast. It is bad for him to indulge his appetite and then escape the consequences by taking tonics or other medicine. It is still worse for a person to indulge his animal passions and escape the consequences of his acts. Nature is relentless and will have

full revenge for any such violation of her laws. Moral results can only be produced by moral restraints. All other restraints defeat the very purpose for which they are intended. The reasoning underlying the use of artificial methods is that indulgence is a necessity of life. Nothing can be more fallacious. Let those who are eager to see the births regulated explore the lawful means devised by the ancients and try to find out how they can be revived. An enormous amount of spade-work lies in front of them. Early marriages are a fruitful source of adding to the population. The present mode of life has also a great deal to do with the evil of unchecked procreation. If these causes are investigated and dealt with, society will be morally elevated. If they are ignored by impatient zealots and if artificial methods become the order of the day nothing but moral degradation can be the result.

A society that has already become enervated through a variety of causes will become still further enervated by the adoption of artificial methods. Those men therefore who are light-heartedly advocating artificial methods cannot do better than study the subject afresh, stay their injurious activity and popularise Brahmacharya both for the married and the unmarried. That is the only noble and straight method of birth-control.

## Some Arguments Considered

My article on birth control has, as was to be expected, given rise to energetic correspondence in favour of artificial methods. I select three typical letters. There is a fourth letter which is largely theological. I therefore omit it. Here is one of the three letters :

" I have read your article on 'birth control' with great interest. The subject is, at present, exercising the minds of many educated men. Last year, we had long and heated debates. They proved at least this much, that young men are acutely interested in this problem, that there is a great deal of prudery and prejudice about it, that in a free and open discussion one's sense of 'decency' is rarely shocked. Your article has set me thinking afresh and I appeal to you for some more light, to dispel many doubts that arise in my mind.

" I agree that 'there can be no two opinions about the necessity of birth control.' I further agree that 'Brahmacharya is an infallible sovereign remedy doing good to those who practise it.' But I ask whether the problem is not one of 'birth control' than of 'self-control.' If so, let us see if self-control is a feasible method of birth control for the average person.

\* Reprinted from *Young India*, April 2, 1925.

"I believe that this problem can be examined from two different points of view, that of the individual and society. It is the duty of each individual to restrain his carnal passions, and thus evolve his spiritual strength. At all times, there are a few such persons, of great moral fibre, who set up this noble standard before themselves, and will follow no other. But I wonder whether they have any perception of the problem of birth control, which we are intent on solving. A *sannyasin* is out for salvation, but not for birth control.

"But can this method solve an economic, social, and political question of the greatest importance to the vast majority of people within a reasonable period of time? It presses for solution on every thinking and prudent *grihastha* even now. How many children can one feed, clothe, educate, and settle in life is a question which brooks no delay. Knowing human nature as you do, can you reasonably expect large numbers completely to abstain from sexual pleasure, after the need for progeny has been satisfied? But I believe you would permit a rational and temperate exercise of the sexual instinct, as is recommended by our *smritikaras*. The vast majority may be asked neither to indulge the passion nor to repress it, but only to regulate it. But, even if this were possible would this method control births? I believe that we shall then have better people, but not fewer people. In fact, the problem of population would become more acute, as an efficient population grows faster than an inefficient one. The art of cattle-breeding does not give us fewer cattle, but more and better cattle.

"I agree that 'union is meant not for pleasure, but for bringing forth progeny.' But you must grant that pleasure is the chief, if not the only, inducement to it. It is Nature's lure to fulfil its purpose. How many would fulfil it, and do fulfil it, where pleasure is lacking? How



many go for pleasure and get progeny, and how many go for progeny and also find pleasure? You say that 'union is a crime, when the desire for progeny is absent.' It beautifully suits a *sannyasin* like you to say so. For have you not also said that he who owns more than he needs is a 'thief' and a 'robber,' that he who loves not others more loves himself less? But why be so hard on poor and weak mortals? To them, a little pleasure, without desire for progeny, would soothe and meet natural changes in body and mind. The fear of progeny would, in several cases, agitate nerves, and in some cases delay marriage. The desire for progeny, in normal cases, would cease after a few years of marriage. Would union after that be a crime? Do you think that a man afraid of committing that 'crime,' would be morally superior by sitting tight over the safety valve of his restless passions? After all, why do you tolerate 'thieves,' who hold more than they need, but not the 'criminals' who unite after the desire for progeny is satisfied? Is it because 'thieves' are too numerous and powerful to reform?

"Lastly, you allege that 'artificial methods are like putting a premium upon vice. They make men and women reckless.' This is a heavy charge, if true. I ask whether 'public opinion' has ever been strong enough to restrain sexual excess. I am aware of drunkards being restrained by fear of such opinion. But I am also aware of the sayings that 'God never sends mouths but He sends meat also,' and 'children are born because of God's Will,' as well as of the prejudice that a large progeny is a proof of manliness. I know cases where such opinion gives a licence to husbands over wives and considers the exercise of the sex instinct as the main bond of marriage. Besides, is it certain that 'adoption of artificial methods *must* result in imbecility and nervous prostration?' There

are methods and methods, and I believe that science has discovered, or will soon discover, innocuous methods. This is not beyond the wit of man.

"But it seems that you would not allow their use in any case, for 'it is wrong and immoral to seek to escape the consequences of one's acts.' This is unexceptionable, only you assume that even a moderate exercise of one's appetite, without desire for progeny, is immoral. Moreover I ask, if any one is ever restrained by the fear of progeny, the consequences of one's acts. In any case, many are impelled to seek the advice of quacks, reckless of their health and happiness. How many abortions have not been caused while 'seeking to escape the consequences of one's acts'? But, even if 'fear' proved an effective restraint, the 'moral' results would be poor indeed. Besides, by what system of justice should the sins of parents be visited upon the heads of their progeny and the imprudence of individuals hurt society? It is true that 'Nature is relentless, and will have full revenge for any such violation of her laws.' But, why assume that the use of artificial methods *is such a violation*? None calls the use of artificial teeth, eyes and limbs as 'unnatural.' That alone is unnatural which does not secure our well-being. I do not believe that mankind is by nature vicious, and that the use of these methods will make it worse. There is enough of licence even now, not even India excepted. It is as easy to prove that this new power will be properly used as that it may be abused. But let us recognise that man is on the point of winning this tremendous power over Nature, and that we can ignore it only at our cost. Wisdom lies in controlling it, not in shunning it. Some of the noblest workers seek the propagation of these methods, not for indulgence, but to help men to self-control. Let us also not forget that woman and her needs have been ignored too long. She

means to have her say in this matter, for she refuses to allow man to treat her body as 'tilth for offspring.'

"The strain of modern civilization is too great to permit her to rear a large family with all the drudgery and worry it means. Dr. Marie Stopes and Miss Ellen Key would never seek the 'nervous prostration' of woman. The methods they suggest can be made effective chiefly by woman, and are more likely to evolve wise motherhood than reckless indulgence. In any case there are circumstances when a lesser evil may avoid a greater. There are dangerous diseases which must be avoided even at the cost of 'nervous prostration.' There are natural periods of lactation when union is unavoidable but injurious if fruitful. There are women, otherwise healthy, who can bear children only at a serious risk to their lives.

"I neither wish nor expect you to turn into a propagandist of birth control. You are at your best in keeping the light of Truth and Chastity burning in its purity and holding it before mortals who seek it. But a prudent parent will seek that light more than an imprudent one. He who realises the need of birth control may easily evolve self-control. The present licence, thoughtlessness and ignorance are so great that even you cry, as if in a wilderness. There is great need for more enlightened discussion than your apologetic and 'reluctant' article permits. If you cannot join in it you must at least recognise it, and if need be, guide it betimes, for there are breakers ahead; and it will serve no purpose to blink our eyes at the danger, and 'hesitate on approaching this subject.' "

Let me clear the ground by saying that I have not written for *sannyasis* or as a *sannyasi*. I do not claim to be one in the accepted sense

of the term. My observations are based upon unbroken personal practice with a slight aberration for a period of twenty five years and that of those who have joined me in the experiment for a long enough period to warrant certain conclusions. In the experiment both young and old men and women are included. I claim a certain degree of scientific accuracy for the experiment. It has undoubtedly a strictly moral basis but it originated in the desire for birth control. My own case was peculiarly for that purpose. Tremendous moral consequences developed as an afterthought though in a perfectly natural sequence. I venture to claim that by judicious treatment it is possible to observe self-control without much difficulty. Indeed it is a claim put forth not merely by me but German and other Nature-cure practitioners. The latter teach that water treatment or earth compresses and a non-heating and chiefly fruitarian diet soothe the nervous system and bring animal passions under easy subjection whilst they, at the same time, invigorate the system. The same result is claimed by *Rajayogis* for scientifically regulated *Pranayama* without reference to the higher practices. Neither the Western nor the ancient Indian treatment is intended for the *sannyasi* but essentially for the householder. If it is contended that birth control is necessary for the nation because of over-population, I dispute the proposition. It has never been proved. In

my opinion, by a proper land system, better agriculture and a supplementary industry, this country is capable of supporting twice as many people as there are in it today. But I have joined hands with the advocates of birth control in India from the standpoint of the present political condition of the country.

I do suggest that men must cease to indulge their animal passions after the need for progeny has ceased. The remedy of self-control can be made popular and effective. It has never had a trial with the educated class. That class has not yet, thanks to the joint-family system, felt the pressure. Those that have have not given a thought to the moral issues involved in the question. Save for stray lectures on Brahmacharya, no systematic propaganda has been carried on for advocating self-control for the definite purpose of limiting progeny. On the contrary the superstition of a larger family being an auspicious thing and therefore desirable still persists. Religious teachers do not generally teach that restriction of progeny in given circumstances is as much a religious obligation as procreation may be under certain other circumstances.

I am afraid that advocates of birth control take it for granted that indulgence in animal passion is a necessity of life and in itself a desirable thing. The solicitude shown for the fair sex is most pathetic. In my opinion it is an insult

to the fair sex to put up her case in support of birth control by artificial methods. As it is, man has sufficiently degraded her for his lust, and artificial methods, no matter how well-meaning the advocates may be, will still further degrade her. I know that there are modern women who advocate these methods. But I have little doubt that the vast majority of women will reject them as inconsistent with their dignity. If man means well by her, let him exercise control over himself. It is not she who tempts. In reality man being the aggressor is the real culprit and the tempter.

I urge the advocates of artificial methods to consider the consequences. Any large use of the methods is likely to result in the dissolution of the marriage bond and in free love. If a man may indulge in animal passion for the sake of it, what is he to do whilst he is, say, away from his home for any length of time or when he is engaged as a soldier in a protracted war or when he is widowed or when his wife is too ill to permit him the indulgence without injury to her health notwithstanding the use of artificial method?

But says another correspondent:

"With respect to your article on birth control in a recent issue, may I respectfully point out that you start by begging the whole question when you assert that artificial methods are injurious? In the Contraceptive Section of the last International Birth Control Conference (London, 1922) attended by members of the medical profession only

the following resolution was passed with 3 dissentients out of 164 present: 'That this meeting of the medical members of the fifth International Birth Control Conference wishes to point out that birth control by hygienic contraceptive devices' is absolutely distinct from abortion in its physiological, legal and moral aspects. It further records its opinion that *there is no evidence that the best contraceptive methods are injurious to health or conducive to sterility.*'

"Now it seems to me that the opinion of such a large body of medical men and women including some of the most eminent names in the profession can hardly be set aside with a stroke of the pen. You say: 'Adoption of artificial method must lead to imbecility and nervous prostration.' Why 'must'? I venture to submit that modern scientific methods do not lead to anything of the kind, though the use of harmful methods through ignorance may. This is only one more argument why proper methods should be taught to all who are likely to need them, *i. e.* to all adults capable of reproduction. You blame these methods for being artificial, and still want medical men to find out 'means of self-control.' I do not quite understand what you mean, but as you refer to medical men, would not any 'means of self-control' devised by them be equally artificial? You say: 'Union is meant not for pleasure, but for bringing forth progeny.' Meant by whom? By God? In that case, what did he create the sexual instinct for? You further say: 'Nature is relentless and will have full revenge for any such violation of her laws.' But Nature at any rate is not a person as God is supposed to be, and does not issue orders to anybody. It is not possible to violate Nature's laws. The consequences of actions are inevitable in Nature. Good and bad are words that we apply to them. The people who use artificial methods do take the consequences of their acts

like those who don't. Your argument therefore does not mean anything unless you can prove that artificial methods are injurious. I assert from observation and experiment that they are not, provided proper methods are used. Actions must be judged moral or immoral according to their results and not by *a priori* assumptions as to their morality.

"The method you propose was also advised by Malthus, but is absolutely impracticable except for a few selected individuals like you. What is the use of advocating methods which cannot be practised? The benefits of *Brahmacharya* have been greatly exaggerated. Modern medical authorities (I mean those who have no religious prejudices) think that it is positively harmful beyond the age of 22 or so. It is religious prejudice which makes you think that sexual union is a sin except for procreation. As nobody can guarantee the result beforehand, you condemn everybody either to complete abstinence or to take the chance of sinning. Physiology does not teach this and it is now too late in the day to ask people to ignore science in favour of dogma."

This writer has taken up an uncompromising attitude. I hope I have given enough illustrations to show that self-restraint and not indulgence must be regarded as the law of life, if we are to accept and retain the sanctity of the marriage tie. I have not begged the question for I do contend that artificial methods, however proper they may be, are harmful. They are harmful not perhaps in themselves but because they increase the appetite which grows with every feed. The mind that is so tuned as to regard indulgence not only lawful but even desirable will simply



feed itself on the indulgence and will at last become so weak as to lose all strength of will. I do maintain that every act of indulgence means loss of precious vitality so needful to keep a man or woman strong in body, mind and soul. Though I have now mentioned the soul, I have purposely eliminated it from the discussion which is intended merely to combat the arguments advanced by my correspondents who seem to disregard its existence. The tuition that is needed for much married and enervated India is not that of indulgence with artificial means but complete restraint, if only for the sake of regaining lost vitality. Let the immoral medicines whose advertisements disfigure our press be a warning to the advocates of birth control. It is not prudery or false modesty which restrains me from discussing the subject. The restraining force is the certain knowledge that the devitalised and enervated youth of the country fall an easy prey to the specious arguments advanced in favour of indulgence.

It is perhaps now hardly necessary for me to combat the medical certificate produced by the second correspondent. It is wholly irrelevant to my case. I neither affirm nor deny that proper artificial methods injure the organs or produce sterility. No array, however brilliant, of medical men can disprove the ruin which I have witnessed of hundreds of youths who have indulged their

passions even though it may be with their own wives.

The analogy drawn by the first writer from false teeth seems to me to be inapplicable. False teeth are indeed artificial and unnatural but they may serve a necessary purpose. Whereas artificial methods are like antidotes taken by a man who wants to eat not for satisfying hunger but for pleasing the palate. Eating for the sake of pleasure is a sin like animal indulgence for the sake of it.

The last letter is interesting for the information it gives:

"The question is now vexing the Governments of the world. I refer to your article on birth control. You doubtless know the antipathy of the American Government towards its propagation. You have no doubt also heard about the free sanction given to it by an Eastern Power — I mean the Empire of Japan. The one rules out birth control altogether — whether as a result of artificial means or natural ones—for reasons best known to every one. The other sponsors it for reasons also universally known. In my opinion, there is nothing to admire in the action of the first. Is there much, however, to despise in the step of the second? Don't you think that the Japanese Government should be given credit at least for facing facts? They must stop procreation; they must also take human nature at its *present worth*. Is not birth control, as at present understood in the West, the only way out for them? You will say 'An emphatic No.' But may I ask if the course you suggest is practicable? It *may be very ideal, but is it practicable?* Can humanity be expected to forego sexual pleasure to any very appreciable degree? It may be easy to find a glorious

few who practise self-control or Brahmacharya. Can this method be however depended upon for a mass movement in this direction? And nothing less than a mass movement is necessary in India to meet the situation."

I must confess my ignorance of the facts about America and Japan. Why Japan is advocating birth control I do not know. If the writer's facts are correct and if birth control by artificial methods is at all general in Japan I make bold to say that this fine nation is rushing headlong to its moral ruin.

I may be wholly wrong. My conclusions may be based on false data. But the advocates of artificial methods have need to be patient. They have no data at all except the modern examples. Surely it is too early to predict anything with any degree of certainty of a system of control which on the face of it seems to be repugnant to the moral sense of mankind. It is easy enough to trifle with youthful nature. It will be difficult to undo the evil effects of such trifling.

## On the Necessity of Continence

I would request those who have carefully read through the book so far to peruse this chapter with even greater care, and ponder well over its subject-matter. There are still several more chapters to be written, and they will, of course, be found useful in their own way. But no other chapter is nearly as important as this. As I have already said, there is not a single matter mentioned in this book which is not based on my personal experience, or which I do not believe to be strictly true.

Many are the keys to health, and they are all quite essential; but the one thing needful, above all others, is Brahmacharya. Pure air, pure water, and wholesome food certainly contribute to health. But how can we be healthy if we expend all the health that we acquire? How can we help being paupers if we spend all the money that we earn? There can be no

\*Translation of a chapter in the author's Gujarati book on health (Part I Chapter IX).

doubt that men and women can never be virile or strong unless they observe true Brahmacharya.

What, then, is Brahmacharya? It means that men and women should refrain from carnal knowledge of each other. That is to say, they should not touch each other with a carnal thought, they should not think of it even in their dreams. Their mutual glances should be free from all suggestion of carnality. The hidden strength that God has given us should be conserved by rigid self-discipline, and transmitted into energy and power,—not merely of body, but also of mind and soul.

But what is the spectacle that we actually see around us? Men and women, old and young, without exception, are caught in the meshes of sensuality. Blinded for the most part by lust, they lose all sense of right and wrong. I have myself seen even boys and girls behaving as if they were mad under its fatal influence. I too have behaved likewise under similar influences, and it could not well be otherwise. For the sake of a momentary pleasure, we sacrifice in an instant all the stock of vital energy that we have laboriously accumulated. The infatuation over, we find ourselves in a miserable condition. The next morning we feel hopelessly weak and tired, and the mind refuses to do its work. Then, in order to remedy the mischief, we consume large

quantities of milk, *bhasmas*, *yakutis* and what not. We take all sorts of 'nervine tonics' and put ourselves under the doctor's mercy for repairing the waste, and for recovering the capacity for enjoyment. So the days pass and the years, until at length old age comes upon us, and finds us utterly emasculated in body and in mind.

But the law of Nature is just the reverse of this. The older we grow, the keener should our intellect be; the longer we live, the greater should be our capacity to communicate the benefit of our accumulated experience to our fellow-men. And such is indeed the case with those who have been true Brahmacharis. • They know no fear of death, and they do not forget God even in the hour of death : nor do they indulge in vain desires. They die with a smile on their lips, and boldly face the day of judgment. They are true men and women; and of them alone can it be said that they have conserved their health.

We hardly realise the fact that incontinence is the root-cause of most of the vanity, anger, fear and jealousy in the world. If our mind is not under our control, if we behave once or more every day more foolishly than even little children, what sins may we not commit consciously or unconsciously ? How can we pause to think of the consequences of our actions, however vile or sinful they may be ?

But you may ask, 'Who has ever seen a true Brahmachari in this sense? If all men should turn Brahmacharis, would not humanity be extinct and the whole world go to rack and ruin?' We will leave aside the religious aspect of this question and discuss it simply from the secular point of view. To my mind, these questions only betray our timidity and worse. We have not the strength of will to observe Brahmacharya, and therefore set about finding pretexts for evading our duty. The race of true Brahmacharis is by no means extinct; but, if they were commonly to be met with, of what value would Brahmacharya be? Thousands of hardy labourers have to go and dig deep into the bowels of the earth in search of diamonds, and at length they get perhaps merely a handful of them out of heaps and heaps of rock. How much greater, then, should be the labour involved in the discovery of the infinitely more precious diamond of a Brahmachari? If the observance of Brahmacharya should mean the end of the world, that is none of our business. Are we God that we should be so anxious about its future? He who created it will surely see to its preservation. We need not trouble to enquire whether other people practise Brahmacharya or not. When we enter a trade or profession, do we ever pause to consider what the fate of the world would be if all men were to do likewise? The true

Brahmachari will, in the long run, discover for himself answers to such questions.

But how can men engrossed in the cares of the material world put these ideas into practice? What about those who are married? What shall they do who have children? And what shall be done by those people who cannot control themselves? We have already seen what is the highest state for us to attain. We should keep this ideal constantly before us, and try to approach it to the utmost of our capacity. When little children are taught to write the letters of the alphabet, we show them the perfect shapes of the letters, and they try to reproduce them as best they can. In the same way, if we steadily work up to the ideal of Brahmacharya, we may ultimately succeed in realising it. What if we have married already? The law of Nature is that Brahmacharya may be broken only when the husband and wife feel a desire for progeny. Those who, remembering this law, violate Brahmacharya once in four or five years, will not become slaves to lust, nor lose much of their stock of vital energy. But alas, how rare are those men and women who yield to the sexual craving merely for the sake of offspring! The vast majority turn to sexual enjoyment merely to satisfy their carnal passion, with the result that children are born to them quite against their will. In the madness of sexual passion, we give no thought to the consequences of our acts. In this



respect, men are even more to blame than women. The man is blinded so much by his lust that he never cares to remember that his wife is weak and unable to bear or rear up a child. In the West, indeed, people have transgressed all bounds. They indulge in sexual pleasures, and devise measures in order to evade the responsibilities of parenthood. Many books have been written on this subject, and a regular trade is being carried on in contraceptives. We are as yet free from this sin, but we do not shrink from imposing the heavy burden of maternity on our women, and we are not concerned even to find that our children are weak, impotent and imbecile. Every time we get children, we offer thanksgiving prayers to God and so seek to hide from ourselves the wickedness of our acts. Should we not rather deem it a sign of the wrath of God to have children who are feeble, sensual, crippled and timid? Is it a matter for joy that mere boys and girls should have children? Is it not rather a curse? We all know that the premature fruit of a too young plant weakens the parent, and so we try all means of delaying the appearance of fruit. But we sing hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God when a child is born of a boy father and a girl mother! Could anything be more dreadful? Do we think that the world is going to be saved by the countless swarms of such impotent children endlessly multiplying in India or elsewhere? Verily, we

are, in this respect, far worse than even the lower animals; for in their case the male and the female are brought together solely with the object of breeding from them. Man and woman should regard it a sacred duty to keep apart from the moment of conception up to the time when the child is weaned. But we go on with our fatal merry-making blissfully forgetful of this sacred obligation. This almost incurable disease enfeebles our mind and leads us to an early grave, after making us drag a miserable existence for a short while. Married people should understand the true function of marriage, and should not violate Brahmacharya except with a view to progeny.

But this is so difficult under our present conditions of life. Our diet, our ways of life, our common talk, and our environments are all equally calculated to rouse animal passions; and sensuality is like a poison eating into our vitals. Some people may doubt the possibility of our being able to free ourselves from this bondage. This book is written not for those who go about with such doubting of heart, but only for those who are really in earnest, and who have the courage to take active steps for self-improvement. Those who are quite content with their present abject condition will find this tedious even to read; but I hope it will be of some service to those who have realised and are disgusted with their own miserable plight.

From all that has been said, it follows that those who are still unmarried should try to remain so; but if they cannot help marrying, they should defer it as long as possible. Young men, for instance, should take a vow to remain unmarried till the age of twenty five or thirty. We cannot consider here all the advantages other than physical which they will reap and which are as it were added unto the rest.

My request to those parents who read this chapter is that they should not tie a mill-stone round the necks of their children by marrying them young. They should look to the welfare of the rising generation, and not merely seek to pamper their own vanity. They should cast aside all silly notions of family pride or respectability, and cease to indulge in such heartless practices. Let them rather, if they are true well-wishers of their children, look to their physical, mental and moral improvement. What greater disservice can they do to their progeny than compel them to enter upon married life, with all its tremendous responsibilities and cares, while they are mere children?

Then again the true laws of health demand that the man who loses his wife, as well as the woman that loses her husband, should remain single ever after. There is a difference of opinion among medical men as to whether young men and women need ever let their vital energy escape, some

answering the question in the affirmative, others in the negative. But while doctors thus disagree we must not give way to over-indulgence from an idea that we are supported by medical authority. I can affirm, without the slightest hesitation, from my own experience as well as that of others, that sexual enjoyment is not only not necessary for, but is positively injurious to, health. All the strength of body and mind that has taken long to acquire is lost all at once by a single dissipation of the vital energy. It takes a long time to regain this lost vitality, and even then there is no saying that it can be thoroughly recovered. A broken mirror may be mended and made to do its work but it can never be anything but a broken mirror.

As has already been pointed out, the preservation of our vitality is impossible without pure air, pure water, pure and wholesome food, as well as pure thoughts. So vital indeed is the relation between health and morals that we can never be perfectly healthy unless we lead a clean life. The earnest man who, forgetting the errors of the past, begins to live a life of purity will be able to reap the fruit of it straightway. Those who practise true Brahmacharya even for a short period will see how their body and mind improve steadily in strength and power, and they will not at any cost be willing to part with this treasure. I have myself been guilty of lapses even after having fully understood the value of Brahmacharya,

and have of course paid dearly for it. I am filled with shame and remorse when I think of the terrible contrast between my condition before and after these lapses. But from the errors of the past I have now learnt to preserve this treasure intact, and I fully hope, with God's grace, to continue to preserve it in the future; for I have, in my own person, experienced the inestimable benefits of Brahmacharya. I was married early, and had become the father of children as a mere youth. When, at length, I awoke to the reality of my situation, I found that I was steeped in ignorance about the fundamental laws of our being. I shall consider myself amply rewarded for writing this chapter if at least a single reader takes a warning from my failings and experiences, and profits thereby. Many people have told me—and I also believe it—that I am full of energy and enthusiasm, and that I am by no means weak in mind; some even accuse me of strength bordering on obstinacy. Nevertheless there is still bodily and mental ill-health as a legacy of the past. And yet, when compared with my friends, I may call myself healthy and strong. If even after twenty years of sensual enjoyment, I have been able to reach this state, how much better off should I have been if I had kept myself pure during those twenty years as well? It is my full conviction, that if only I had lived a life of unbroken Brahmacharya all through, my energy

and enthusiasm would have been a thousandfold greater and I should have been able to devote them all to the furtherance of my country's cause & my own. If an imperfect Brahmachari like myself can reap such benefit, how much more wonderful must be the gain in power,—Physical, mental, as well as moral—that unbroken Brahmacharya can bring to us !

When so strict is the law of Brahmacharya, what shall we say of those guilty of the unpardonable sin of illegitimate sexual enjoyment ? The evil arising from adultery and prostitution is a vital question of religion and morality and cannot be fully dealt with in a treatise on health. Here we are only concerned to point out how thousands who are guilty of these sins are afflicted by venereal diseases. God is merciful in this that the punishment swiftly overtakes sinners. Their short span of life is spent in abject bondage to quacks in a futile quest after a remedy for their ills. If adultery and prostitution disappeared, at least half the present number of doctors would find their occupation gone. So inextricably indeed has venereal disease caught mankind in its clutches that thoughtful medical men have been forced to admit, that so long as adultery and prostitution continue, there is no hope for the human race, all the discoveries of curative medicine notwithstanding. The medicines for these diseases are so poisonous that although they may appear

to have done some good for the time being, they give rise to other and still more terrible diseases which are transmitted from generation to generation.

In concluding this chapter which has grown longer than I expected, let me briefly point out how married people can observe Brahmacharya. It is not enough to observe the laws of health as regards air, water and food. The husband should avoid privacy with his wife. Little reflection is needed to show that the only possible motive for privacy between husband and wife is the desire for sexual enjoyment. They should occupy separate rooms at night, and be constantly engaged in good works during the day. They should read such books as fill them with noble thoughts and meditate over the lives of great men, and live in the constant realisation of the fact that sensual enjoyment is the root of much misery. Whenever they feel a craving for sexual indulgence, they should bathe in cold water, so that the heat of passion may be cooled down, and be refined into the energy of virtuous activity. This is a difficult thing to do, but we have been born to wrestle with difficulties and conquer them; and he who has not the will to do so can never enjoy the supreme blessing of true health.

## Self-Control

I have been asked to say a few words about Brahmacharya. There are some subjects which I occasionally discuss in the pages of *Navajivan*, but which I rarely deal with in my speeches. Brahmacharya is one of these. I hardly ever speak about it, as I know that it cannot be explained by words and is a very difficult subject. You wish me to speak about Brahmacharya in the general restricted acceptance of the term, not about Brahmacharya with the wider significance of control of all the senses. Even the observance of Brahmacharya as ordinarily understood is described in the Shastras as a hard task. This is true in the main, but I may be permitted to make a few observations which point the other way. Brahmacharya appears to be difficult because we do not control the other senses. Take for example the organ of taste which leads the rest. Brahmacharya will come easy to any one who

\* Translation by V. G. Desai of Gujarati speech before the Seva Samaj, Bhadrak, reported in *Navajivan* for 26th February, 1925.



controls his palate. Zoölogists tell us that Brahmacharya is observed by the lower animals as for instance cattle, to a greater extent than by human beings, and this is a fact. The reason is that cattle have perfect control over the palate, not by will but by instinct. They subsist on mere fodder and of this too, they take a quantity just sufficient for nutrition. They eat to live, do not live to eat, while our case is just the reverse. The mother pampers her child with all kinds of delicacies. She believes that she can evince her love only by feeding the child to the utmost. By doing this she does not enhance the child's enjoyment of his food but on the other hand makes everything insipid and disgusting for him. The taste depends upon hunger. Even sweets will not be as tasteful to one who is not hungry as a slice of dry bread is to another who is really so. We prepare food in various ways with a variety of spices in order to be able to load the stomach, and then wonder when we find Brahmacharya difficult to observe.

We misuse and corrupt the eyes which God has given us and do not direct them to the right things. Why should not the mother learn *Gayatri* and teach it to the child? She need not trouble with the inner and deeper meaning of the *mantra*. It is enough for her to understand and explain to the child that it inculcates reverence for the sun. This is but a rough interpretation.

of the *mantra* which I am placing before you. How shall we revere the sun? By looking up to the sun and performing an ablution as it were of the eyes. The author of the *Gayatri* was a *Rishi*, a seer. He taught us that nowhere else can we see such a beautiful drama as is daily staged before our eyes at the time of sunrise. There is no stage-manager greater than God or more sublime and there is no more magnificent stage than the sky. But where is the mother who washes her child's eyes and then asks him to have a look at the sky? Mothers in our country are unfortunately concerned with quite other things. The boy may perhaps turn out to be a big official, thanks to his education at school, but we are apt to ignore the very large part which the home atmosphere plays in his education. Parents wrap their children up in heavy clothing and smother them while they fondly imagine that they are adding to their beauty. Clothes are meant just to cover the body, protect it against heat and cold, not to beautify it. If a child is trembling with cold we must send him to the fireside to warm himself or out into the street for a run, or into the field for work. It is only thus that we can help him to build a splendid constitution. By keeping the child confined in the house we impart a false warmth to his body. By pampering his body we only succeed in destroying it.

So much for the clothes. Then again, the light conversation carried on in the house creates a very harmful impression on the child's mind. Elders talk of getting him married. The things which he sees around him also tend to corrupt him. The wonder is that we have not sunk to the lowest depths of barbarism. Restraint is observed in spite of conditions which render it well-nigh impossible. A gracious Providence has so arranged things that man is saved in spite of himself. If we remove all these obstacles in the way of Brahmacharya it not only becomes possible but also easy to observe.

We are thus weak and yet we have to compete with a world of men physically stronger than ourselves. There are two ways of doing this: the one godly, and the other satanic. The satanic way is to adopt all measures right or wrong for developing the body, such as beef-eating etc. A friend of my childhood used to say that we must take meat and that otherwise we could not develop our physique so as to meet the English on equal terms. Beef-eating became the vogue in Japan when the time came for her to face other nations. We must follow in her wake if we wish to build our bodies in the satanic way.

But if we build up our bodies in the godly way, the only means at our disposal is Brahmacharya. I pity myself when people call me a *Naishthika* Brahmachari. How could such a

description apply to one who, like me, is married and has children? A *Naishthika* Brahmachari would never suffer from fever, head-ache, cough or appendicitis, as I have suffered. Medical men say that appendicitis is caused even by an orange-seed remaining in the intestines. But an orange-seed cannot find permanent lodgment in a clean healthy body. When the intestines get weakened they are unable to expel such foreign matter. My intestines too must have weakened and hence the inception of appendicitis in me. Children eat all manner of things and the mother can never watch them all the time. Yet they do not suffer as their intestines are functioning vigourously. Let no one therefore mistake me for a *Naishthika* Brahmachari, who should be made of infinitely sterner stuff. I am not an ideal Brahmachari although I aspire to be one.

Brahmacharya does not mean that one may not touch a woman, even one's sister, in any circumstance whatsoever. But it does mean that one's state of mind should be as calm and unruffled during such contact as when one touches say, a piece of paper. A man's Brahmacharya avails for nothing if he must hesitate in nursing his sister who is ill. He has to be as free from excitement in case of contact with the fairest damsel on earth as in contact with a dead body. If you wish your children to attain such Brahmacharya the framing of their curriculum must not

rest with you but with a Brahmachari like myself imperfect as I am.

A Brahmachari is a *Sannyasi* by nature. *Brahmacharyashram* is superior to *Sannyasa*, but we have thoroughly degraded it and hence the degradation of *Grihasthashram* as well as *Vanaprasthashram*, and the disappearance of *Sannyasa*. Such is our sorry plight.

If we take to the satanic way I have described, we will not be able to face the Pathans even after five hundred years. But if we take to the godly way we can meet them this very day. For the change of mental attitude necessary in following the latter can take place in a moment, while building up the body to the required standard would take ages. The nation, God willing, can follow the godly way if only the parents prepare an atmosphere favourable to the observance of Brahmacharya on the part of the rising generation.

## Brahmacharya\*

It is not easy to write on this subject. But my own experience being fairly extensive I am always desirous of placing some of its results before the reader. Some letters which I have received have reinforced this desire. †

A correspondent asks:

What is Brahmacharya? Is it possible to observe it in its perfection? If yes, have you attained that state?'

Brahmacharya properly and fully understood means search after Brahma. As Brahma is present in every one of us we must seek for it within with the help of meditation and consequent realisation. Realisation is impossible without complete control of all the senses. Therefore Brahmacharya signifies control of all the senses at all times and at all places in thought, word and deed.

Perfect Brahmacharis, men or women, are perfectly sinless. They are therefore near to God, they are like God.

\* translation by V. G. Desai of an article in *Narajivan* for 25th May 1924.

I have no doubt that such perfect observance of Brahmacharya is possible. I regret to say that I have not attained such perfection, although my effort in that direction is ceaseless and I have not given up hope of attaining it in this very life.

I am on my guard when awake. I have acquired control over the body. I am also fairly restrained in speech. But as regards thoughts there still remains much for me to do. When I wish to concentrate my thoughts upon a particular subject I am disturbed by other thoughts too and thus there is a conflict between them. Yet during waking hours I am able to prevent their collision. I may be said to have reached a stage where I am free from unclean thoughts. But I cannot exercise an equal control over my thoughts in sleep. In sleep all manner of thoughts enter my mind, and I also dream unexpected dreams. Sometimes there arises a craving for pleasures previously enjoyed. When these cravings are impure there are bad dreams. This condition implies sinful life.

My thoughts of sin are scotched but not killed. If I had acquired perfect mastery over my thoughts, I should not have suffered from pleurisy, dysentery and appendicitis as I have during the last ten years. I believe that when the soul is sinless, the body which she inhabits is healthy too. That is to say, as the soul progresses

towards freedom from sin, the body also tends to become immune from disease. But a healthy body in this case does not mean a strong body. A powerful soul lives only in a weak body. As the soul advances in strength the body languishes. A perfectly healthy body might yet be quite emaciated. A strong body is often diseased. Even if there be no disease such a body catches infection soon, while a perfectly healthy body enjoys complete immunity from it. Pure blood has the power of expelling all obnoxious germs.

This wonderful state is indeed difficult to reach. Or else I should have reached it already. For I am confident that I have not been indifferent in adopting every single measure conducing to that end. There is no external thing which can keep me from my goal, but it is not given us easily to wipe out the impressions left by past actions. I am not at all despondent in spite of this delay, for I can conceive the state of perfect freedom from sin, I can even catch a faint glimpse of it. And the progress I have made gives ground for hope, not for despair. Even if I die without realising my aspiration, I shall not believe that I am defeated. For I believe in a future life as deeply as I do in the present. And so I know that the least possible effort is not wasted.

I have entered into these autobiographical details in order that my correspondents and others in a like condition might feel encouraged and



cultivate self-confidence. *Atma* is the same in every one of us. All souls possess equal potentialities; only, some have developed their powers while others have them in a dormant condition. These latter too will have a like experience if only they try.

Thus far I have dealt with Brahmacharya in its wider significance. Brahmacharya in the popular or current acceptance of the term means control of animal passion in thought, word and deed. This meaning is also correct as the control of animal passion has been held to be very difficult. The same stress has not been laid upon the control of taste and hence the control of passion has grown more difficult and almost impossible. Medical men believe that passion is stronger in a body worn out by disease and therefore Brahmacharya appears hard to our enervated people.

I have spoken above of a weak but healthy body. Let no one therefore run away with the idea that we should neglect physical culture. I have expounded the highest form of Brahmacharya in my broken language which may perhaps be misunderstood. One who wishes to attain perfect control of all the senses must be prepared in the end to welcome weakness of body. All desire for bodily strength vanishes when there is no longer any attachment for the body.

But the body of a Brahmachari who has conquered animal passion must be very strong and

full of lustre. Even this restricted Brahmacharya is a wonderful thing. One who is free from carnal thoughts even in his dreams is worthy of the world's adoration. It is clear that control of the other senses is an easy thing for him.

Another friend writes:

"My condition is pitiable. The same vicious thoughts disturb me day and night, in the office, on the road, when I am reading or working or even praying. How am I to control my thoughts? How can I look upon womankind as upon my own mother? How can nothing but the purest affection emanate from the eyes? How can I eradicate wicked thoughts? I have your article on Brahmacharya before me, but it seems I cannot profit by it at all."

This is indeed heart-rending. Many of us are in a like predicament. But so long as the mind is up against wicked thoughts there is no reason to get disheartened. The eyes should be closed and the ears stopped with cotton if they are sinning. It is a good practice to walk with the eyes cast downwards so that there is no occasion for them to wander in other directions. One should flee from the place where unclean talk is going on or where unclean music is being sung.

Control should be acquired over the organ of taste. My experience is that one who has not mastered taste cannot control animal passion either. It is no easy task to conquer the palate. But conquest of passion is bound up with the conquest

of the palate. One of the means of controlling taste is to give up spices and condiments altogether or as far as possible. Another and a more effective means is always to cultivate a feeling that we eat just in order to sustain the body and never for taste. We take in air not for taste but for life. Just as we take water to quench our thirst, in the same way should we take food only to satisfy hunger. Unfortunately parents make us contract a contrary habit from very childhood. They corrupt us by giving us all manner of delicacies not for our sustenance but out of mistaken affection. We have got to fight against this unfavourable home atmosphere.

But our most powerful ally in conquering animal passion is *Ramanama* or some similar *mantra*. The *Dwadasha mantra* will also serve the same purpose. One may repeat any *mantra* one pleases. I have suggested *Ramanama* as I have been familiar with it since childhood and as it is my constant support in my struggles. One must be completely absorbed in whatever *mantra* one selects. one should not mind if other thoughts disturb one during the *Japa*. I am confident that one who still goes on with the *Japa* in faith will conquer in the end. The *mantra* becomes one's staff of life and carries one through every ordeal. One should not seek worldly profit from such sacred *mantras*. The characteristic power of these *mantras* lies in their standing guard

over personal purity and every diligent seeker will realise this at once. It should however be remembered that the *mantra* is not to be repeated parrot-like. One should pour one's soul into it. The parrot repeats such *mantras* mechanically, we must repeat them intelligently in the hope of driving out undesirable thoughts and with full faith in the power of the *mantras* to assist us to do so.

## Truth v. Brahmacharya\*

A friend writes to Mahadeo Desai:

"You will remember that in an article on Brahmacharya published in *Navajivan* some time ago, translated in *Young India* by you, Gandhiji admitted that he still had bad dreams. The moment I read it I felt that such admissions could have no wholesome effect, and I came to know later that my fear was justified.

"During our sojourn in England my friends and I kept our character unscathed in spite of temptations. We remained absolutely free from wine, woman and meat. But on reading Gandhiji's article one of the friends exclaimed to me in despair: 'If such is the case with Gandhiji even after his herculean efforts, where are we? It is useless to attempt to observe Brahmacharya. Gandhiji's confession has entirely changed my point of view. Take me to be lost from today.' Not without some hesitation I tried to reason with him: 'If the way is so difficult for men like Gandhiji, it is much more so for us, and we should therefore redouble our effort.'—the way Gandhiji or you would argue. But it was all in vain. A character that had been spotless so long was thus bespattered with mire. What would Gandhiji or you say if some one were to hold Gandhiji responsible for this fall?

\* Reprinted from *Young India*, February 25, 1926.

" As long as I had only one such instance in mind, I did not write to you. You would possibly have put me off by saying that it was an exceptional case. But there were more such instances and my fear has been more than justified.

" I know that there are certain things which are quite easy for Gandhiji to achieve, and which are impossible for me. But by the grace of God, I can say that something which may be impossible for even Gandhiji may be possible for me. It is this consciousness or pride that has saved me from a fall, though the admission above-mentioned has completely disturbed my sense of security.

" Will you please invite Gandhiji's attention to this fact?—especially when he is just in the midst of his autobiography. It is certainly brave to say the truth and the naked truth, but the world and the readers of *Navajivan* and *Young India* will misunderstand him. I fear that one man's meat may be another man's poison."

The complaint does not come to me as a surprise. When Non-co-operation was in full swing, and when during the course of the struggle I confessed to an error of judgment a friend innocently wrote to me: 'Even if it was an error, you ought not to have confessed it. People ought to be encouraged to believe that there is at least one man who is infallible. You used to be looked upon as such. Your confession will now dishearten them.' This made me smile and also made me sad. I smiled at the correspondent's simpleness. But the very thought of encouraging people to believe a fallible man to be infallible was more than I could bear.

A knowledge of one as he is can always do good to the people, never any harm. I firmly believe that my prompt confessions of my errors have been all to the good for them. For me at any rate they have been a blessing.

And I may say the same thing of my admission about the bad dreams. It would do the world a lot of harm if I claimed to be a perfect Brahmachari without being one. For it would sully Brahmacharya and dim the lustre of truth. How dare I undervalue Brahmacharya by false pretences? I can see today that the means I suggest for the observance of Brahmacharya are not adequate, are not found to be invariably efficacious, because I am not a perfect Brahmachari. It would be an awful thing for the world to be allowed to believe that I was a perfect Brahmachari, whilst I could not show the royal road to Brahmacharya.

Why should it not be sufficient for the world to know that I am a genuine seeker, that I am wide awake, and that my striving is ceaseless and unbending? Why should not this knowledge be sufficient encouragement to others? It is wrong to deduce conclusions from false premises. It is wisest to draw them from things achieved. Why argue that because a man like me could not escape unclean thoughts, there is no hope for the rest? Why not rather argue that if a Gandhi who was once given to lust, can today live as friend and brother to his wife and

can look upon the fairest damsel as his sister or daughter, there is hope for the lowliest and the lost ? If God was merciful to one who was so full of lust, certainly all the rest would have His mercy too !

The friends of the correspondent who were put back because of a knowledge of my imperfections had never gone forward at all. It was a false virtue that fell at the first blast. The truth and observance of Brahmacharya and similar eternal principles do not depend on persons imperfect as myself. They rest on the sure foundations of the penance of the many who strove for them and lived them in their fulness. When I have the fitness to stand alongside those perfect beings, there will be much more determination and force in my language than today. He, whose thoughts do not wander and think evil, whose sleep knows no dreams and who can be wide awake even whilst asleep, is truly healthy. He does not need to take quinine. His incorruptible blood will have the inherent virtue of resisting all infection. It is for such a perfectly healthy state of body, mind, and spirit that I am striving. This knows no defeat or failure. I invite the correspondent, his friends of little faith, and others to join me in that striving, and I wish that they may go forward even like the correspondent quicker than I. Let my example inspire those who are behind me with more



confidence. All that I have achieved has been in spite of my weakness, in spite of my liability to passion,—and because of my ceaseless striving and infinite faith in God's grace.

No one need therefore despair. My Mahatma-ship is worthless. It is due to my outward activities, due to my politics which is the least part of me and is therefore evanescent. What is of abiding worth is my insistence on truth, non-violence and Brahmacharya which is the real part of me. That permanent part of me, however small, is not to be despised. It is my all. I prize even the failures and disillusionments which are but steps towards success.

## Purity

I am being inundated with letters on Brahmacharya and means to its attainment. Let me repeat in different language what I have already said or written on previous occasions. Brahmacharya is not mere mechanical celibacy, it means complete control over all the senses and freedom from lust in thought, word and deed. As such it is the royal road to self-realisation or attainment of Brahma.

The ideal Brahmachari has not to struggle with sensual desire or desire for procreation; it never troubles him at all. The whole world will be to him one vast family, he will centre all his ambition in relieving the misery of mankind and the desire for procreation will be to him as gall and wormwood. He who has realised the misery of mankind in all its magnitude will never be stirred by passion. He will instinctively know

\* Reprinted from *Young India*, April 29, 1926. It then appeared under the caption "On Brahmacharya."

the fountain of strength in him, and he will ever persevere to keep it undefiled. His humble strength will command respect of the world, and he will wield an influence greater than that of the sceptred monarch.

But I am told that this is an impossible ideal, that I do not take count of the natural attraction between man and woman. I refuse to believe that the sensual affinity, referred to here can be at all regarded as natural; in that case the deluge would soon be over us. The natural affinity between man and woman is the attraction between brother and sister, mother and son or father and daughter. It is that natural attraction that sustains the world. I should find it impossible to live, much less carry on my work, if I did not regard the whole of womankind as sisters, daughters or mothers. If I looked at them with lustful eyes, it would be the surest way to perdition.

Procreation is a natural phenomenon indeed, but within specific limits. A transgression of those limits imperils womankind, emasculates the race, induces disease, puts a premium on vice and makes the world ungodly. A man in the grip of the sensual desire is a man without moorings. If such a one were to guide society, to flood it with his writings and men were to be swayed by them, where would society be? And yet we have the very thing happening today. Supposing a moth whirling round a light were to record

the moments of its fleeting joy and we were to imitate it regarding it as an example, where would we be? No, I must declare with all the power I can command that sensual attraction even between husband and wife is unnatural. Marriage is meant to cleanse the hearts of the couple of sordid passion and take them nearer to God. Lustless love between husband and wife is not impossible. Man is not a brute. He has risen to a higher state after countless births in brute creation. He is born to stand, not to walk on all fours or crawl. Bestiality is as far removed from manhood, as matter from spirit.

In conclusion I shall summarise the means to its attainments.

The first step is the realisation of its necessity.

The next is gradual control of the senses. A Brahmachari must needs control his palate. He must eat to live, and not for enjoyment. He must see only clean things and close his eyes before anything unclean. It is thus a sign of polite breeding to walk with one's eyes towards the ground and not wandering about from object to object. A Brahmachari will likewise hear nothing obscene or unclean, smell no strong, stimulating, things. The smell of clean earth is far sweeter than the fragrance of artificial scents and essences. Let the aspirant to Brahmacharya also keep his hands and feet engaged in all the

waking hours in healthful activity. Let him also fast occasionally.

The third step is to have clean companions, clean friends and clean books

The last and not the least is prayer. Let him repeat *Ramanama* with all his heart regularly every day, and ask for divine grace.

None of these things are difficult for an average man or woman. They are simplicity itself. But their very simplicity is embarrassing. Where there is a will, the way is simple enough. Men have not the will for it and hence vainly grope. The fact that the world rests on the observance, more or less, of Brahmacharya or restraint, means that it is necessary and practicable.

## In Confidence\*

I receive so many letters questioning me regarding celibacy and I hold such strong views upon it, that I may no longer, especially at this the most critical period of national life, withhold my views and results of my experience from the reader of *Young India*.

The word in Sanskrit corresponding to celibacy is Brahmacharya and the latter means much more than celibacy. Brahmacharya means perfect control over all the senses and organs. For the perfect Brahmachari nothing is impossible. But it is an ideal state which is rarely realised. It is almost like Euclid's line which exists only in imagination, never capable of being physically drawn. It is nevertheless an important definition in Geometry yielding great result. So may a perfect Brahmachari exist only in imagination. But if we did not keep him constantly before our mind's eye, we should be like a rudderless

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ship. The nearer the approach to the imaginary state, the greater the perfection.

But for the time being, I propose to confine myself to Brahmacharya as in the sense of celibacy. I hold that a life of perfect continence in thought, speech and action is necessary for reaching spiritual perfection. And the nation that does not possess such men is the poorer for the want. But my purpose is to plead for Brahmacharya as a temporary necessity in the present stage of national evolution.

We have more than an ordinary share of disease, famines and pauperism—even starvation among millions. We are being ground down under slavery in such a subtle manner that many of us refuse even to recognise it as such, and mistake our state as one of progressive freedom in spite of the triple curse of economic, mental and moral drain. The evergrowing military expenditure, the injurious fiscal policy purposely designed to benefit Lancashire and other British interests, and the extravagant manner of running the various departments of the State constitute a tax on India which has deepened her poverty and reduced her capacity for withstanding diseases. The manner of administration has, in Gokhale's words, stunted national growth so much that the tallest of us have to bend. India was even made to crawl on her belly in Amritsar. The studied insult of the Punjab and the refusal to

apologise for the insolent breach of the pledged word to Indian Musalmans are the most recent examples of the moral drain. They hurt the very soul within us. The process of emasculation would be complete, if we submit to those two wrongs.

Is it right for us who know the situation to bring forth children in an atmosphere so debasing as I have described? We only multiply slaves and weaklings, if we continue the process of procreation whilst we feel and remain helpless, diseased and famine-stricken. Not till India has become a free nation, able to withstand avoidable starvation, well able to feed herself in times of famine, possessing the knowledge to deal with malaria, cholera, influenza and other epidemics, have we the right to bring forth progeny. I must not conceal from the reader the sorrow I feel, when I hear of births in this land. I must confess that for years I have contemplated with satisfaction the prospect of suspending procreation by voluntary self-denial. India is to-day ill-equipped for taking care even of her present population, not because she is over-populated, but because she is forced to foreign domination whose creed is progressive exploitation of her resources.

How is the suspension of procreation to be brought about? Not by immoral and artificial checks that are resorted to in Europe, but by a life of discipline and self-control. Parents must



teach their children the practice of Brahmacharya. According to the Hindu Shastras the lowest age at which boys may marry is 25. If the mothers of India could be inclined to believe that it is sinful to train boys and girls for a married life, half the marriages of India will automatically stop. Nor need we believe the fetish of early puberty among girls because of our hot climate. I have never known a grosser superstition than this of early puberty. I make bold to say that the climate has absolutely nothing to do with puberty. What does bring about untimely puberty is the mental and moral atmosphere surrounding our family life. Mothers and other relations make it a religious duty to teach innocent children that they are to be married when they reach a particular age. They are betrothed, when they are infants, are even babes in arm. The dress and the food of the children are also aids to stimulating passions. We dress our children like dolls, not for their but for our pleasure and vanity. I have brought up children by the score. And they have without difficulty taken to and delighted in any dress given to them. We provide them with all kinds of heating and stimulating foods. Our blind love takes no note of their capacity. The result undoubtedly is an early adolescence, immature progeny and an early grave. Parents furnish an object lesson which the children easily grasp. By reckless indulgence in their passions they serve

for their children as models of unrestrained licence. Every untimely addition to the family is ushered in amid trumpets of joy and feasting. The wonder is that we are not less restrained than we are, notwithstanding our surroundings. I have not a shadow of doubt that married people, if they wish well to the country and want to see India become a nation of strong and handsome, full-formed men and women, would practise perfect self-restraint and cease to procreate for the time being. I tender this advice even to the newly married. It is easier not to do a thing at all than to cease doing it, even as it is easier for a life abstainer to remain teetotaler than for a drunkard or even a temperate man to abstain. To remain erect is infinitely easier than to rise from a fall. It is wrong to say that continence can be safely preached only to the satiated. There is hardly any meaning, either, in preaching continence to an enfeebled person. And my point is that whether we are young or old, satiated or not, it is our duty at the present moment to suspend bringing forth heirs to our slavery.

May I point out to parents that they ought not to fall into the argumentative trap of the rights of partners. Consent is required for indulgence, never for restraint; this is an obvious truth.

When we are engaged in a death grip with a powerful government, we shall need all the

strength physical, material, moral and spiritual. We cannot gain it unless we husband the one thing which we must prize above every thing else. Without this personal purity of life, we must remain a nation of slaves. Let us not deceive ourselves by imagining, that because we consider the system of government to be corrupt, Englishmen are to be despised as competitors in a race for personal virtue. Without making any spiritual parade of the fundamental virtues, they practise them at least physically in an abundant measure. Among those who are engaged in the political life of the country, there are more celibates and spinsters than among us. Spinsters among us are practically unknown, except the nuns who leave no impression on the political life of the country, whereas in Europe, thousands claim celibacy as a common virtue.

I now place before the reader a few simple rules which are based on the experience not only of myself, but of many of my associates.

1. Boys and girls should be brought up simply and naturally in the full belief that they are and can remain innocent.

2. All should abstain from heating and stimulating foods, condiments such as chillies, fatty and concentrated foods such as fritters, sweets and fried substances.

3. Husband and wife should occupy separate rooms and avoid privacy.

4. Both body and mind should be constantly and healthily occupied.

5. Early to bed and early to rise should be strictly observed.

6. All unclean literature should be avoided. The antidote for unclean thoughts is clean thoughts.

7. Theatres, cinemas, etc., which tend to stimulate passion, should be shunned.

8. Nocturnal dreams need not cause any anxiety. A cold bath every time for a fairly strong person is the finest preventive in such cases. It is wrong to say that an occasional indulgence is a safeguard against involuntary dreams.

9. Above all one must not consider continence even as between husband and wife to be so difficult as to be practically impossible. On the contrary, self-restraint must be considered to be the ordinary and natural practice of life.

10. A heart-felt prayer every day for purity makes one progressively pure.



# Appendix I

## GENERATION AND REGENERATION\*

( *By William Loftus Hare* )

### I. GENERATION IN BIOLOGY

Microscopic observation of unicellular life has revealed the fact that in the lowest forms reproduction takes place by fission. Growth follows on nourishment until the maximum size for the species is reached and then the organism divides its nucleus into two, and soon afterwards its body. Given the normal conditions—water and nourishment—this appears to exhaust its functions: but in the case of denial of these conditions there is sometimes observed a reconjunction of two cells, from which rejuvenation but not reproduction may result.

In multicellular life there is nourishment and growth, as in the life below it, but a new phenomenon is observed. The group of cells constituting the body are mostly differentiated to separate functions: some for obtaining nourishment, some for its distribution, some for locomotion and some for protection, as, for instance, the skin. The primitive function of fission is abandoned by those to whom new duties are assigned, but is preserved by those cells which occupy a more interior position in the organism.

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These are guarded and served by the others which have undergone varied differentiation, while they themselves remain as they were. They divide as before, but *within* the multicellular body; and at length some are extruded from it. They have, however, gained a new power; instead of dividing in two as their ancestors did, they undergo segmentation or multiplication of nuclei without separation. This process continues until the organism has reached the normal size and structure of its multicellular species. But in the body we may observe a new feature; the original deposit of germ-cells are not only or chiefly extruded for external reproduction; they themselves supply a continuous stream of fresh units from their group for interior differentiation, wheresoever they are needed. These undifferentiated germ-cells are thus performing two functions simultaneously, namely: internal reproduction for the building up of the body and external reproduction for the continuation of the species. Here we may clearly distinguish two processes, which we shall call *regeneration and generation*. One point more is important here: the regenerative process—internal reproduction—is fundamental for the individual and therefore necessary and primary: the generative process is due to a superfluity of cells, and is therefore secondary. Probably both are closely dependent on nourishment: for if this be low there will be a deficiency of internal reproduction and no necessity for, or possibility of, external reproduction. The law of life, then, at this level is to feed the *germ-cells*, firstly for regeneration, secondly for generation. In case of deficiency, regeneration must take the first place and generation be suspended. Thus we may learn the origin of the suspension of reproduction and follow it to its later phases of human continence and asceticism generally. Inner reproduction can never be suspended except at the cost of death, the normal origin of which is thus also discerned.

## II. REGENERATION IN BIOLOGY.

Before passing to the animal and human species, in which sexual differentiation has reached its highest phase, and become the norm, we must glance at the intermediate form of reproduction, namely, that which preceded the bi-sexual and followed the non-sexual forms. It has received the mythological name "hermaphrodite," because it possessed both male and female functions. There still remain a few organisms which exhibit this condition, in which the internal multiplication of germ-cells goes on as above described, but instead of their entire extrusion for external growth they are only temporarily extruded and passed by intrusion to another part of the body, where they are nurtured until able to begin a life of their own.

The law of growth seems to be that individuals, whether unicellular, multicellular or hermaphrodite, have the potentiality of developing to the stage reached by the parent creature at the time of their extrusion. Thus it is the individual that progresses; each time it gives birth to offspring it is or may be in itself in a higher state of organisation than it was before; consequently its offspring will be able to reach the normal point of development attained by its parent. The length of the re-production period for each species and each individual will differ; but ideally it extends from maturity to approaching decline. Premature or decadent reproduction will secure an inferior offspring according to its dominant conditions. Here, then, we perceive a law for sexual ethic derived from physical conditions: the period when generation is most favourable to the reproduction of the species and to regeneration is full maturity only.

I pass by the history of the differentiation in sex which follows the hermaphrodite, because it is a fact which may be taken for granted. It is necessary to observe, however, a new condition that has made its appearance with the



bi-sexual forms. Not only have the "two halves" of the hermaphrodite become physically separate, but each continues to produce germ-cells independently of the other. The male continues the ancient, fundamental process of internal reproduction by the multiplication of germ-cells (which for external reproduction by extrusion and intrusion are known as *spermatozoa*); the female does likewise, reserving rather than extruding the ova for impregnation by the male germ-cells. In both cases regeneration is primary and absolutely necessary for the individual. Every moment of growth from conception onwards exhibits the increasing process of regeneration. At maturity in the human species generation may take place, but not necessarily for the good of the individual, only for the race. Here, as in the lower forms, if regeneration ceases or is imperfectly performed, disease or death will supervene. Here, too, there is rivalry of interest between the individual and the future race. If there be not superfluity the use of the germ-cells for generative reproduction will deprive the process of regeneration (internal reproduction) of some of its material. As a matter of fact among civilized human beings sexual intercourse is practised vastly more than is necessary for the production of the next generation, and is carried on at the expense of internal reproduction, bringing disease, death and more in its train.

Another and perhaps closer glance may be taken of the human body, using that of the male as an example, though *mutatis mutandis*, the female exhibits similar processes.

The central reservoir of germ-cells is the most ancient and fundamental location of biological life. From the first the embryo, daily and hourly, grows by the multiplication of cells nourished by the mother's secretions; here, again *feed the germ-cells* is the law of life. As they multiply and differentiate, they assume new forms and functions,

transitory or permanent as the case may be. The moment of physical birth makes little difference to the process: now through the lips instead of through the *nexus* the infant takes nourishment to feed germ-cells; these in their turn rapidly multiply and pass all over the body to places where they are needed, as they always are, to make good disused tissues. The circulatory system absorbs these cells from their primal seat and disperses them to every part of the body. In great groups they take on special duties and form and repair the different organs of the body. They undergo death a thousand times so that life may be preserved in the society of cells to which they belong, all these "corpses" going to the periphery, and especially to the bones, teeth, skin, and hair hardening in such a way as to give strength and protection to the body. Their death is the price of the higher life of the body and all that is dependent upon it. If they did not take nourishment, reproduce, disperse, differentiate and eventually die, the body could not live.

From the germ or sexual cells as already said come two kinds of life: (1) internal, or regenerative; (2) external, or generative. Regeneration, then, as we have called it, is the basis of the life of the body, and it draws its life from the same source as does generation. Hence it may be perceived how, in given circumstances, the two processes may be formally opposed to one another: and more than formally; they may be actually at enmity.

### III. REGENERATION AND THE UNCONCIOUS

The process of regeneration is not and cannot be mechanistic in character, but like the primitive fission, is vitalistic. That is to say, it exhibits intelligence and will. To suppose that life separates, differentiates and segregates by a process that is purely mechanistic is inconceivable. True, these fundamental processes are so far removed from our

present consciousness as to seem to be uncontrolled by the human or animal will. But a moment's reflection will show that just as the will of the fully developed human being directs his external movements and actions in accordance with the guidance of the intellect—this, indeed, being its function—so the earlier processes of the gradual organization of the body must, within the limits provided by environment be allowed to be directed by a kind of will guided by a kind of intelligence. This is now known to psychologists as "the unconscious." It is a part of our self, disconnected from our normal daily thinking, but intensely awake and alert in regard to its own functions—so much so that it never for a moment subsides into sleep as the consciousness does.

The unconscious, then, is the vital force which superintends the complex processes of regeneration. Its first task is the segmentation of the impregnated ovum and thereafter, until death, it continues to preserve its appropriate organism by absorbing and despatching the fundamental germ-cells to their respective stations. Though I here may seem to contradict many notable psychologists, I would say that the Unconscious is only concerned with the individual and not with the species: therefore, first with regeneration. Only in one sense can the Unconscious be said to concern itself with the future generation: to whatsoever state of organization its energy has brought the individual that the Unconscious seeks to conserve. But it cannot do the impossible; it cannot, even with the help of the conscious will, prolong life indefinitely. Therefore it reproduces itself by the impulse of sexual intercourse, in which it may be said the Unconscious and the conscious wills unite. The gratification, normally, of sexual intercourse may be taken as a sign of there being some purpose to be served beyond that of the individual, who eventually pays a price more heavy than he knows. This truth

is expressed intuitively in the words of the Hebrew writer who puts a solemn warning into the divine lips: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." (Gen. iii., 16).

#### IV. GENERATION AND DEATH

It is undesirable to load this article with extracts from the writings of scientific specialists, but as the matter here dealt with is so important, and popular ignorance so widespread, I am compelled to make some authoritative quotations. Ray Lankester says:

"It results from the constitution of the protozoon body as a single cell, and its method of multiplication by fission, that death has no place as a natural recurrent phenomenon among these organisms."

Weismann writes: "Natural death occurs only among multicellular organisms, the single-celled forms escape it. There is no end to their development which can be likened to death, nor is the rise of new individuals associated with the death of the old. In the division the two portions are equal; neither is the older nor the younger. Thus there arises an unending series of individuals, each as old as the species itself, each with the power of living on indefinitely, ever dividing, but never dying."

Patrick Geddes writes (In *The Evolution of Sex*, from which the above extracts are taken): "Death, we may thus say, is the price paid for a body, the penalty its attainment and possession sooner or later incurs. Now by a body is meant a complex colony of cells in which there is more or less division of labour" (p. 20).

Again to quote Weismann's striking words: "The body or *Soma* thus appears to a certain extent as a subsidiary appendage of the true bearers of life—the reproductive cells."

And Ray Lankester has the same idea: "Among multicellular animals certain cells are separated from the

rest of the constituent units of the body. . . The bodies of the higher animals which die, may from this point of view be regarded as something temporary and non-essential, destined merely to carry for a time, to nurse and to nourish, the more important and deathless fission-products."

But the most striking, and probably most surprising fact among the data before us is the close connection, in higher organisms, between reproduction and death, a subject upon which many scientists write with clarity and certainty. *The nemesis of reproduction is death.* This is patent in many species, where the organism, sometimes the male and sometimes the female, not infrequently dies in continuing the life of the species. Survival of the individual after reproduction is a triumph of life that is not always attained — in some cases never. In his essay on death Goette has well shown how closely and necessarily bound together are the facts of reproduction and death, which may both be described as katabolic crises. Pattrick Geddes writes on this subject (p. 255 *op. cit.*): "The association of death and reproduction is indeed patent enough, but the connection is in popular language usually misstated. Organisms one hears, have to die; they must therefore reproduce, else the species would come to an end. But such emphasis on posterior utilities is almost always only an afterthought of our invention. The true statement, as far as history furnishes an answer, is not that animals reproduce because they have to die, but that they die because they have to reproduce."

And Goette says briefly: "It is not death that makes reproduction necessary but reproduction has death as its inevitable consequence."

After giving a large number of instances, Geddes concludes with these remarkable words: "In the higher animals, the fatality of the reproductive sacrifice has been greatly lessened, yet death may tragically persist, even in

human life, as the direct nemesis of love. The temporarily exhausting effect of even moderate sexual indulgence is well known, as well as the increased liability to all forms of disease while the physical energies are thus lowered."

This discussion may be summed up briefly and, I hope, conclusively, by saying that in human life the sexual act is essentially katabolic (or a movement towards death) in the male and in parturition of the offspring it is katabolic for the female.

A whole chapter could be written on the effect of undue indulgence on the health of the body. Virility, old age, vitality and immunity from disease are the normal lot of nearly or quite continent persons. A proof of this, if a rather unpleasant one, is derived from the fact that a very large number of diseases in men have been and are cured by the artificial injection of *semen* into debilitated persons.

There may well be a resistance in the mind of the reader to accepting the conclusions offered in the present section of this essay. People will hastily point to the many old and apparently healthy persons who have been parents of large families; they will quote statistics which show that the married live longer than the celibate, and so forth. Neither of these arguments have force in face of the fact that death, scientifically conceived, is not an event which occurs at the end of life but a process which begins — as shown by the authorities I have quoted — with life itself, and continues, moment by moment, to run alongside with life. Anabolic repair and katabolic waste are the parallel forces of life and death. The first leads in the race during youth and early manhood; in middle life they run neck and neck, but in decline the death process gains the lead, and with the last breath, conquers. Everything which leads to this conquest, which hastens it by a day, a year or a decade, is part of the death process.

And such, indeed, is sexual intercourse, especially when practised to excess.

It is sufficient to say here to those who doubt the authority of my words above that they may do well to consult a most interesting and informative work entitled *The Problem of Age, Growth and Death*, by Charles S. Minot [1908, John Murray], in which the author expounds the physiology of decay and death. Not being a medical book, but a group of popular lectures, specific diseases and sexuality are but lightly discussed. The one fact upon which I rely is that natural death is a *process*, not an isolated event. But the book that I value above all others on the subject of sexuality is *Regeneration, The Gate of Heaven* by Dr. Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie [Boston: The Barta Press], whose title indicates a predominantly spiritual aim, although the physical and ethical aspects are fully discussed, supported by hosts of scientific and patristic authorities. Strangely enough however, the author does not emphasize the relation of sex to death, which is the subject of this section of my essay.

#### V. THE ORGAN OF THE MIND

The extent of the static opposition between generation and regeneration may be realized when we consider the higher functions of the body, and particularly the physical organ of the mind. The nervous system—cerebro-spinal and sympathetic—are, like all other organs, built up of cells that have once been germ-cells, drawn from the deepest seat of life: in continuous streams they are distributed and differentiated to the ganglia of the systems, and of course, in immense quantities, to the brain. Withdrawal of germ-cells from their upward, regenerative course for generative or merely indulgent purposes, deprives the organs of their full replenishing stock of life, to their cost, slowly and ultimately. It is these physical facts which constitute

the basis of a personal sexual ethic, counselling moderation, if not restraint — at any rate, explaining the origin of restraint, as said above.

I do not hesitate to add to this section one illustration, out of several which might be adduced, to show how closely, in some philosophical systems, continence is believed to minister to mental and spiritual vigour. I allude to the Indian system of Yoga. The reader may refer to any of the standard translations of *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras* (that by James H. Woods in the Harvard Oriental Series is the best known to me) in order to test the brief statement I now make.

It is probably known to those who are familiar with Indian religious and social life that asceticism was and is still practised by the Hindus. Originally called *tapas*, it had two aims, one to maintain and increase the powers of the body and the other to transcend the normal powers of the mind. Traditionally, one is known as *hathayoga* and is carried to extraordinary degrees of attainment, making bodily perfection an end in itself. The other, known as *rajayoga*, is directed rather towards intellectual and mystical development. Yet the two systems have in common an essential physical ethic, to which I now call attention. This is set forth in the classical *sutras* of Patanjali, and in many later works derived from this master psychologist of ancient India.

Among the "hindrances" to the desired attainment "passion" is said to be the third (II. 7). Passion is that greed or thirst or desire for either pleasure or the means of attaining it, says the philosopher. Pleasure is to be rejected by the yogin because it is intermingled with pain (II. 15). That disposes of the psychological attraction of sexuality, and in later *sutras* we are led to physical considerations.

There are eight aids to yoga's end; the first and second are called "Abstentions and Observances" and constitute



the preliminary ethic which the yogin must observe. It is astonishing that the many babblers on the yoga systems either do not know or refrain from saying that the fourth abstention is "Abstinence from incontinence" (II. 30), and that "Continence is the control of the hidden organ of generation."

But the consequences of the abstention from incontinence are remarkably rich according to this philosopher, who says (II. 38): "As soon as he is grounded in abstinence he acquires energy—that is power. By the acquisition of which he accumulates qualities such as minuteness . . . and when perfected he is endowed with the eight perfections, of which the first is called 'Reasoning.' He is able to transfer his thinking to his hearers."

Happy man! Rare attainment! A modern Indian scholar, M. N. Dvivedi has a very significant comment on this sutra, with which I will conclude. He says: "It is a well-known physiological law that the *semen* has great connection with the intellect, and we might add the spirituality of man. The abstaining from waste of this important element of being, gives power, the real occult power such as is desired. No *yoga* is ever reported successful without the observance of this rule as an essential preliminary."

It only remains to be said that in the many commentaries on *yoga* the purpose and process are veiled in quasi-scientific mythology. The "power" is said to creep silently like a serpent from the lowest *chakram* to the highest: that is, from the testes to the brain.

## VI. PERSONAL SEXUAL ETHIC

Ethic in general is derived from facts given in the experience of life whether of individuals or societies or the race. Historically, it has often been formulated by some outstanding personality, and sometimes invested with

a divine or semi-divine authority. Moses, The Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, Aristotle, Christ, and great moralists and philosophers who in all countries followed them, all proposed, each in their separate day and country, some criterion by which human conduct might be tried. A general ethical system is dependent, then, upon metaphysics, psychology, physiology and sociology, which together supply the facts or supposed facts, which speak for themselves. A personal sexual ethic, therefore, for any age or civilization will be drawn from the data which most impress men in their own experience. This personal sexual ethic like the social sexual ethic, varies from age to age, but it has some elements of stability in it, which are more or less permanent.

In attempting to formulate a personal sexual ethic for these times, one would draw from all known facts and probabilities, especially when these are confirmed by the experience of reliable observers. I am not assuming too much when I say that the facts adduced in my sections I to V suggest immediately to the mind of a candid and intelligent reader a number of logical and inevitable conclusions. From the point of view of bodily, mental and spiritual welfare, sexual continence would appear to be the irrefutable law deduced from the facts. But immediately another law springs up to challenge it—"the law in our members" as the Christian apostle calls it. We are in the presence of an antinomy—law contradicting law. The older law is that of Nature, whence we have the sexual impulse; the newer law is that of intuition, of science, of experience, of conviction, of ideal. Obedience to the older law tends to decay and premature death (speaking relatively): the path of the newer law is beset with difficulties so great that one hardly listens seriously to its voice. People cannot get themselves to believe this statement of the case. They begin at once to say: But, but, but? It is worthy.

of remark here that the formulation of the strictest ethic by *yogin*, *bhikkhu* and monk does not, as is so often believed, rest on mythologic fables or superstitions, but on an intuition of the physiological facts described in this essay.

I know of no modern writer who has stated the case for the sexual ethic for the Christian more forcibly or clearly than Leo Tolstoy, the now discredited idealist of what once was Russia. I print it here as an illustration of the old philosopher's views: ‡

102. The instinct of the continuation of the race—the sexual instinct—is innate in man. In the animal condition he fulfils his destiny by satisfying this instinct, and in so fulfilling it finds welfare.

103. But with the awakening of consciousness, it appears to man that the gratification of this instinct may increase the welfare of his separate being, and he enters into sexual intercourse, not with the object of continuing the race, but to increase his personal welfare. This constitutes the sexual sin. . . .

107. In the first case, when man desires to keep chaste§ and to consecrate all his powers to the service of God, sexual sin will consist in any sexual intercourse whatever, even though it have for its object the birth and rearing of children. The purest marriage state will be such an innate sin for the man who has chosen the alternative of chastity.

113. The sexual sin, i. e., mistake, for the man who has chosen the service of chastity, consists in this: he might

‡ The reader should remember that Tolstoy's definition of sin has no theological connotation; sin is defined by him as that which constitutes an obstacle to the manifestation of *love*, which in its turn, is defined as universal good-will.

§ The words *chaste* and *chastity* are used by the author in their Russian signification which includes complete abstinence from sexual intercourse.

have chosen the highest vocation and used all his powers in the service of God, and consequently, for the spread of love and towards the attainment of the highest welfare, instead of which he descends to a lower plane of life and deprives himself of his welfare.

114. The sexual sin or mistake for the man who has chosen to continue the race, will consist in the fact that by depriving himself of having children, or, at all events, of family relationships, he deprives himself of the highest welfare of sexual life.

115. In addition to this—as with the gratification of all needs—those who try to increase the pleasure of sexual intercourse diminish the natural pleasure in proportion as they addict themselves to lust.

It will be observed that Tolstoy's doctrine is an ethical relativity; the effective absolute is not fixed for man by God or some authoritative teacher, but is chosen by the individual himself. All that is necessary is that he should conform to the law he has accepted.

Such an ethic offers a series of descending prohibitions. To the man who has a conviction in favour of entire continence, and who intelligently controls himself for higher physical and psychic ends, any form of sexual indulgence is disallowed; to the man who has entered into the bond of marriage, sexuality outside it is forbidden. Further, promiscuous or irregular intercourse of the unmarried would nevertheless exclude such a degrading relation as prostitution, while any person engaging in natural act should shun unnatural vices. Finally, to any class of person indulging at all, over-indulgence would be regarded as an evil, while for the immature and the youthful, indulgence should be postponed. Such is the system of sexual ethic.

I can hardly think that any one can be found incapable of understanding the nature of this general sexual ethic and there must be very few who would, on serious reflection,

deny its force. There is a tendency, however, to meet such an ethic by sophistry of various kinds. People suppose that because continence is difficult, and undoubtedly rare, its advocacy is invalid. Logically they should say the same of fidelity in marriage—which is in some cases difficult—or restricted indulgence within it, or adherence to the natural practice. If they deny one ideal they may deny all and permit us to fall into the lowest vices and inordinate lust. Why not? The only reasonable and logical method is to follow the star above us, the star of the ideal that leads us out of one declension after another and enables us to conquer by the power of one law the power of its antinomy. Thus by the intelligent and volitional practice of this ethic a man may conceivably be raised from the unnatural vices of youth to natural indulgence even if promiscuous; from this he may be drawn to the discipline of married fidelity, and for the sake of himself and his partner, to such restraint as they are able to endure. The same ethic may lead him on to the higher victories of continence, or indeed catch him before he has sunk to the several lower phases of indulgence.

#### VII. EROS AND AGAPE

The New Testament has much teaching in reference to "love," and adopts two conceptions, which must be separately examined. The first is that of *eros*, the passive love of life, of the world, of man and woman, of the manifold sensations and emotions that yield us pleasure. This *eros* is not a matter of our wilful choice: we are attracted here and repelled there; we gravitate to life itself, by forces that seem to be greater than ourselves, and to which we, for the most part, respond by appropriate action. Our likes and dislikes, our loves and hates, our affection and disaffection form one system in *eros*. For what does *eros* ask? For welfare: for the welfare of

that separate personality in which the claims are felt most keenly—namely, for “myself.” And that welfare is pursued with egoistic motive through every life, every generation, every nation, growing in intensity and remorselessness, until it reaches, as lately, a state of world-war. It passes through innumerable phases, adopts, by the aid of the intellect, all kinds of mechanical and economic devices, and is at the present moment incarnate in the system of modern civilization.

What, then, we may legitimately ask, was the Christian teaching about this *eros*, this love of life? Was it to be despised, neglected, resisted, or stamped out? Or, was it to be given free rein to attain its ends? All the teaching as to *eros* may be summed up in the simple words: “Your Heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of,” and “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” *Eros* is not to be destroyed, but transcended; a higher aim is proposed by Christ which, if attempted with success, will lead to a “more abundant life” in which a purified *eros* has its share.

It is here we meet with the essential Christian Love, called in the New Testament *agape*. We are able to understand at once its distinctive quality as compared with *eros*. *Agape*, unlike *eros*, is an act of personal will. It is “loving-kindness” that overrides attraction and repulsion, and so can be extended to friend and enemy alike. Christian love emphatically is not, therefore, the weak and sentimental emotion it is so often supposed to be, but is, in its very nature, an effort of the will that rises above all emotion. It is not merely will, but *will qualified by goodness*, and the Christian, in exercising such love, accomplishes and facilitates for others the aims of their *eros*; like the Heavenly Father, he also “knows what things men have need of.” By means of the faculties of

imagination and compassion, he is prompted to meet their needs, for as he would that men should do for him, so he strives to do for them: for he knows that *eros* in them, as in him, asks for life. The Christian's conception of life, therefore, does not deny the claims of *eros*, but emphasizes the duty of *agape*. Christian ethic is thus a new life-direction, a turning round from the way of the world, from the seeking of private welfare to positive goodwill and universal welfare.

The early Christians were taught, like other people, a "golden rule," but even though this were intelligible enough, they were taught also something still more lofty and metaphysical: men are to imitate God: as he is perfect in loving kindness, so also must His servants be: "because God is love;" *hoti ho theos agape estin* (Matt. v., 48; John Ep. I., IV., 8 ).

#### VIII. SOCIAL SEXUAL ETHIC

Just as Society is the extension and co-ordination of the activities of individuals, so a social sexual ethic rises out of a personal one. In other words, society requires additions to and qualifications of the personal ethic, and the chief instance of these is the institution of marriage. A great deal has been written upon the history of marriage by learned scientists, and the data collected are immense. Nothing but the bare conclusions need be cited here in order to enable us to refer to modern expedients that are being offered.

Anciently, and arising out of the facts of human reproduction, the mother was naturally the more important of the two partners. She was, as she still is, the chief agent of Nature's process. Within her and around her are the centres of family growth. Consequently matriarchy, or the rule of the mother, was once widely recognized, and polyandry, the practice of associating several males with

the central female, was admitted. There are vestiges of this system still in vogue among the primitive tribes of Asia. Out of it, and partly as a consequence of tribal association, the status of the husband was evolved. One of the several men associated with the mother—the strongest and most attractive defender—was raised to a position of preference. Indeed the word "husband" contains the history of the institution down to early Scandinavian times. He was *husbuondi*, the housedweller, bound, as others were not, to the house. Eventually, the husband became the master of the house, and one of this class the chief or king of the tribe; and just as under the matriarchy the practice of polyandry appeared, so under male rule the practice of polygamy developed.

Psychologically, therefore, if not socially, man is naturally polygamous and woman naturally polyandrynous. As a male, the man radiates his desire in many directions—always lighting for the time being on the most attractive of the opposite sex. And similarly with the female. But human society, both primitive and modern, could not exist unless some check were placed upon the promiscuous, natural, psychological impulses, which are, in all species and kingdoms below the human, exuberant and prolific. The check invented by Society inevitably was marriage, and eventually monogamous marriage. Its only alternative is promiscuity and the utter disruption, at least, of the present form of Society. We can, of course, see the contest going on before our eyes. Prostitution, irregular and non-legal unions, adulteries and divorces are the day-to-day evidence that monogamous marriage has not established itself in power over the older and more primitive relationships. Will it ever do so?

Meanwhile, notice must be given to an expedient that has long been secretly present with us, but has lately shown its face without shame. It is called "Birth Control,"



and consists in the use of chemical and mechanical means for preventing conception. Conception, of course, apart from its burden upon the woman, places a restraint for a considerable time upon the man, especially upon the man of good feeling. Birth control or contraception removes all prudential motives for self-restraint, and makes it possible for sexual indulgence in marriage to be limited only by the diminution of desire or the advance of age. Apart from this, however, it inevitably has an influence outside the marriage relation. It opens the door for irregular, promiscuous and unfruitful unions, which from the point of view of modern industry, sociology and politics, are full of dangers. I cannot go into these here. It is sufficient to say that by contraception, inordinate sexual indulgence both in and out of marriage is facilitated, and, if I am right in my foregoing physiological arguments, evil must come to both individuals and the race.

#### IX. CONCLUSION

Like the seed cast by the sower, this essay will fall into the hands of some who will despise it, of those who from incapacity or sheer idleness will not even understand it. In some of those who for the first time hear of its ideas, it will rouse opposition and even anger; but to a few it will appeal as truthful and useful. Yet even they will find doubts and questions rising in their minds. The simplest of them will say to me: "According to your arguments sexual intercourse ought not to take place; the world would then become unpeopled—which is absurd! Therefore you must be wrong." My reply is that I have no such dangerous nostrum to offer. "Birth Control" is the most potent form of birth prevention and will depopulate the world faster than the attempted practice of continence. My purpose is a simple one: by offering certain philosophic and scientific truths as a challenge to ignorance and indulgence, I desire to help to purify the sexual life of our time.

## Appendix II

### CHASTITY AND SENSUALITY\*

The subject of sex is a remarkable one, since, though its phenomena concern us so much, both directly and indirectly, and, sooner or later, it occupies the thoughts of all, yet all mankind, as it were, agree to be silent about it, at least the sexes commonly one to another. One of the most interesting of all human facts is veiled more completely than any mystery. It is treated with such secrecy and awe as surely do not go to any religion. I believe that it is unusual even for the most intimate friends to communicate the pleasures and anxieties connected with this fact, much as the external affair of love, its comings and goings, are bruited. The Shakers do not exaggerate it so much by their manner of speaking of it, as all mankind by their manner of keeping silence about it. Not that men should speak on this or any subject without having anything worthy to say; but it is plain that the education of man has hardly commenced,—there is so little genuine intercommunication.

In a pure society, the subject of marriage would not be so often avoided from shame and not from reverence, winked out of sight, and hinted at only, but treated naturally and simply,—perhaps simply avoided, like the

\* From *Essays* by Henry David Thoreau.

kindred mysteries. If it cannot be spoken of for shame, how can it be acted of? But, doubtless, there is far more purity, as well as more impurity, than is apparent.

Men commonly couple with their idea of marriage a slight degree at least of sensuality; but every lover, the world over, believes in its inconceivable purity.

If it is the result of a pure love, there can be nothing sensual in marriage. Chastity is something positive, not negative. It is the virtue of the married especially. All lusts or base pleasures must give place to loftier delights. They who meet as superior beings cannot perform the deeds of inferior ones. The deeds of love are less questionable than any action of an individual can be, for, it being founded on the rarest mutual respect, the parties incessantly stimulate each other to a loftier and purer life, and the act in which they are associated must be pure and noble indeed, for innocence and purity can have no equal. In this relation we deal with one whom we respect more religiously even than we respect our better selves, and we shall necessarily conduct as in the presence of God. What presence can be more awful to the lover than the presence of his beloved?

If you seek the warmth even of affection from a similar motive to that from which cats and dogs and slothful persons hug the fire, because your temperature is low through sloth, you are on the downward road, and it is but to plunge yet deeper into sloth. Better the cold affection of the sun, reflected from fields of ice and snow, or his warmth in some still wintry dell. The warmth of celestial love does not relax, but nerves and braces its enjoyer. Warm your body by healthful exercise, not by cowering over a stove. Warm your spirit by performing independently noble deeds, not by ignobly seeking the sympathy of your fellows who are no better than yourself. A man's social and spiritual discipline must answer to his

corporeal. He must lean on a friend who has a hard breast, as he would lie on a hard bed. He must drink cold water for his only beverage. So he must not hear sweetened and coloured words, but pure and refreshing truths. He must daily bathe in truth cold as spring water, not warmed by the sympathy of friends.

Can love be in aught allied to dissipation? Let us love by refusing, not accepting one another. Love and lust are far asunder. The one is good, the other bad. When the affectionate sympathise by their higher natures, there is love; but there is danger that they will sympathise by their lower natures, and then there is lust. It is not necessary that this be deliberate, hardly even conscious: but, in the close contact of affection, there is danger that we may stain and pollute one another, for we cannot embrace but with an entire embrace.

We must love our friend so much that she shall be associated with our purest and holiest thoughts alone. When there is impurity, we have "descended to meet," though we knew it not.

The *luxury* of affection,—there's the danger. There must be some nerve and heroism in our love, as of a winter morning. In the religion of all nations a purity is hinted at, which, I fear, men never attain to. We may love and not elevate one another. The love that takes us as it finds us degrades us. What watch we must keep over the fairest and purest of our affections, lest there be some taint about them! May we so love as never to have occasion to repent of our love!

There is to be attributed to sensuality the loss to language of how many pregnant symbols? Flowers, which, by their infinite hues and fragrance, celebrate the marriage of the plants, are intended for a symbol of the open and unsuspected beauty of all true marriage, when man's flowering season arrives.

Virginity, too, is a budding flower, and by an impure marriage the virgin is deflowered. Whoever loves flowers, loves virgins and chastity. Love and lust are as far asunder as a flower-garden is from a brothel.

J. Biberg, in the *Amœnitates Botanicæ*, edited by Linnæus, observes (I translate from the Latin): "The organs of generation, which, in the animal kingdom, are for the most part concealed by nature, as if they were to be ashamed of, in the vegetable kingdom are exposed to the eyes of all; and, when the nuptials of plants are celebrated, it is wonderful what delight they afford to the beholder, refreshing the senses with the most agreeable colour and the sweetest odour; and, at the same time, bees and other insects, not to mention the humming-bird, extract honey from their nectaries, and gather wax from their effete pollen." Linnæus himself calls the calyx the *thalamus*, or bridal chamber; and the corolla the *aulæum*, or tapestry of it, and proceeds to explain thus every part of the flower.

Who knows but evil spirits might corrupt the flowers themselves, rob them of their fragrance and their fair hues, and turn their marriage into a secret shame and defilement? Already they are of various qualities, and there is one whose nuptials fill the lowlands in June with the odour of carrion.

The intercourse of the sexes, I have dreamed, is incredibly beautiful, too fair to be remembered. I have had thoughts about it, but they are among the most fleeting and irrecoverable in my experience. It is strange that men will talk of miracles, revelation, inspiration, and the like, as things past, while love remains.

A true marriage will differ in no wise from illumination. In all perception of the truth there is a divine ecstasy, an inexpressible delirium of joy, as when a youth

embraces his betrothed virgin. The ultimate delights of a true marriage are one with this.

No wonder that out of such a union, not as end, but as accompaniment, comes the undying race of man. The womb is a most fertile soil.

Some have asked if the stock of men could not be improved,—if they could not be bred as cattle. Let Love be purified, and all the rest will follow. A pure love is thus, indeed, the panacea for all the ills of the world.

The only excuse for reproduction is improvement. Nature abhors repetition. Beasts merely propagate their kind; but the offspring of noble men and women will be superior to themselves, as their aspirations are. By their fruits ye shall know them.